

Students' Perception of Socio-Cultural Factors Affecting Academic Performance

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Abstract

Students' academic performance is very important to all stakeholders in education. The research assessed whether social and culture factors have influence on students' academic performance. The objective was to determine whether cultural factors have influence on academic performance of students and also to assess whether social factors have influence on academic performance of students. A sample size of 400 was used for the study and convenient sampling method was used. Chi-square was used to compare the proportions, which enabled us to get the P value. From the analysis, it was evident that study group, parents, peers/friends, church, beliefs, family, social group, place of residence, and role as a class representative/executive have an influence on the academic performance of students and should not be ignored by educators, students and decision makers. Other four factors which did not contribute to academic performance were tribe, ethnic group and boy/girlfriend relationship. The study suggested that students' should be educated and counseled on how to spend their time.

Keywords: Perception; Social; Culture; Academic Performance.

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1. Introduction

Student academic performance is paramount to every institution as well as the other stakeholders. For a student to progress and stay in the institution s/he should excel in all the examinations that would be conducted. Students are assessed on their performance with their Grade Point Average (GPA) as well as their Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA). This determines how the student is performing for the period. The CGPA is very important to students, employers and other stakeholders in the educational sector [1, 2]. It is an objective tool for assessing the performance of students [3] and this helps the institution to be aware of students who will be promoted, repeated, withdrawn from the programme of study.

There are many factors contributing to the success or failure of a student in any tertiary institution in the world [4, 5]. Some of these factors identified by researchers are gender [6, 7], entry qualifications [8], family income [9] and personality [10].

The focus of the research is on Koforidua Polytechnic in Ghana and is one of the best tertiary institutions in the country. In Koforidua Polytechnic, student performance is dear to the hearts of the managers and due to that, standards are set to help the students succeed in their programme of studies. This research is to provide information to students on the activities and functions they should be engaged in and how they could be successful in their studies. It will also enable the academicians, administrators, and parents to advise students on how they should spend their time and the activities they should participate in. In reviewing literature it came to light that there is few or less research done on socio-cultural factors contributing to the success or failure of students' performance in the country. The research is to assess whether social and culture factors have influence on students' academic performance.

The objectives for the study are;

- To determine whether cultural factors have influence on academic performance of students.
- To assess whether social factors have influence on academic performance of students.

2. Literature review

The factors influencing students' academic performance are numerous and a good number of research have been done in this area. The literature review was done on the social and culture factors identified and these factors include church, pastors/Imam, beliefs, peers/friends, tribe, family, parents, ethnic group, study group, boy/girlfriend relationship, social group, place of residence, and role. Cultural and social factors determine how students behave on campus and these factors shape their orientation [11]. These factors should be considered by Managers of institutions because if they are respected the students tend to behave in certain ways.

3. Culture and social factors

Culture is a complex factor to be considered but the selected factors for the study include; the church, Pastor/Imam, beliefs, tribe and ethnic group. A research by [12] found out that gender, ethnicity, and occupation

of parent contribute significantly to academic performance of student. Parent involvement and concern about the ward education [13] as well as education level [4, 14] influence academic performance positively and should not be ignored. Family members and community provide help and support to students to shape and improve their academic performance [15].

As students socialize with others on campus the influence of those people are very important for their performance. A research by [16] found out that peers have a great influence on the decision making of people and they can influence their performance. Again, it came to light that religion and family do not influence the decision making of people. Many researchers have identified some factors like demographic, family and school factors as variables contributing to students' academic performance [4, 5]. Other factors like Study group, boy/girl friendship, social group, role, tribe, beliefs, Pastor/Imam, and place of residence are influential factors which determine the behaviour of people in an environment and should not be ignored by academicians.

4. Methodology

The population for the study were students of Koforidua Polytechnic which was 6541 and a sample was taken. The formula used to arrive at the sample size was, $\frac{N}{1+N(e^2)}$ where N is the number of the population; e is tolerable error of 0.05.

$$n = \frac{6541}{1+6541(0.05)^2} = \frac{6541}{16.355} = 400$$

Based on the formula used the sample size for the study is 400.

The research employed the survey method of which questionnaire were used and mix method was used for the data analysis. The researchers designed questionnaire using the likert scale after which it was pilot test on some selected students at University of Ghana Koforidua centre students. After the pilot test some corrections were made and the final questionnaire came out. Convenient sampling method was employed to administer the questionnaire to the targeted population. With this method questionnaires were given to students at the lecture halls, hostels and the institution's soccer field. Two (2) research assistants were employed to administer the questionnaire on Koforidua Polytechnic campus. They visited students in the lecture rooms, ceremonial ground and their hostels and it took them a week to administer and gather all the questionnaires, and the retrieval rate was 100%. Frequencies and percentages were used for the analysis and these made the discussion very easy. Also, chi-square was used to compare the proportions, which enabled us to arrive at the P value and the significant level selected was 0.05.

5. Discussion of the results

The discussion is based on the various socio-cultural factors and its effects on academic performance of students in Koforidua Polytechnic. From the analysis, 57.3% were male and 42.8% were female; while 63.3% were between the age range of 18-24, 34.8% for 25-34, 1% respectively for both 35-44 and 45years and above. It is clear that most of the students are young and the male dominated.

The table below gives the general discussion of the results;

Table 1: Analysis of the variables and their P value/percent

Variables	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	P value
Church	234(58.5%)	99(24.5%)	67(16.8%)	0.0058
Beliefs	299(74.8%)	35(8.8%)	66(16.5%)	0.0001
Peers/friends	247(61.8%)	94(23.5%)	59(14.8%)	0.0001
Tribe	114(28.5%)	94(23.5%)	192(48%)	0.0001
Family	332(83%)	17(4.3%)	51(12.8%)	0.0001
Parents	346(86.5%)	28(7%)	26(6.5%)	0.0001
Ethnic group	132(33%)	118(29.5%)	150(37.5%)	0.0001
Study group	324(81%)	33(8.3%)	43(10.8%)	0.0001
Boy/girlfriend relationship	196(49%)	78(19.5%)	126(31.5%)	0.7597
Social group	244(61%)	53(13.3%)	103(25.8%)	0.0001
Place of residence	257(64.3%)	63(15.8%)	80(20.1%)	0.0001
Role as class rep/executive	232(58%)	111(27.8%)	57(14.3%)	0.0089

P values show the chi-square comparison between the ‘agree’ frequencies and the combined frequencies of both ‘neutral’ and ‘disagree’ groups.

From table 1, it is obvious that nine (9) out of the twelve (12) factors used for the study were contributing to the academic performance of the students and three (3) were not. These nine (9) factors that were agreed by the respondents are; church (58.5%), beliefs (74.8%), peers/friends (61.8%), family (83%), parents (86.5%), social group (81%), place of residence (64.3%), and role as a class representative/executive (58%). Also, the P value for these factors is 0.0001 respectively which is less than 0.05. These factors should be noted by educators because they are important to students and it will also help the educators to counsel and help students to be successful in their studies.

Besides, three (3) factors did not influence academic performance of the students and these factors include tribe (28.5%), ethnic group (33%), and boy/girlfriend relationship (49%). The P value for these factors is 0.0001 but that of boy/girlfriend relationship is 0.7597. Again, the reason why the P value is 0.0001 is that the disagree and the neutral frequencies compared is more than 50% of the total. This means tribe and ethnic group do not influence academic performance of students. These factors should be noted by both students and educators to enable them advice students and for the students themselves to be aware of how/where they should spend their time and the activities they should get involved.

6. Conclusion and recommendation

From the analysis, it was evident that not all the factors selected for the study contributed to the success of the students. The study supports the opinions of [4, 5, 15] that families and place of residence influence academic

performance of students. Again, the study supports the assertion made by [16] that peers/friends influence the decision making of people and should not be ignored. It is clear that parents have a positive influence on academic performance of their wards. This finding supports the opinions of [12-14] that parents have positive influence on academic performance of their children.

The study also revealed that ethnic group and tribe do not support academic performance of students and these contradict the assertion made by [12] that ethnicity supports academic performance. This also means that students should not get involved in ethnic activities at the expense of their studies.

From the study academicians and educators should help and counsel students on how to spend their time on campus and also the kind of activities they should get involved. Parents and lecturers as well as administrators should encourage the students to form study groups to help them improve on their academic performance.

Students should also be careful in the selection of their peers/friends when on campus because peers/friends are a great influence on academic performance and stay on campus. Due to this peers/friends who are not contributing positively to one's academic performance should be eliminated by the student.

7. Limitations of the study

This study used only socio-cultural factors to assess academic performance and in the future other researchers could also look at personal, environmental, institutional and psychological factors and a combination of these factors to assess its impact on students' academic performance. Also, the scope of the study could be extended to cover more institutions because this study was limited to only one institution.

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