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Review Article

**INVESTIGATING THE STUDY HABITS AMONG  
STUDENTS OF IRANIAN MEDICAL SCIENCES  
UNIVERSITIES: A REVIEW****Abdolreza Gilavand\***Expert on Faculty Appointments, Department of Education Development Center, Ahvaz  
Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, Ahvaz, Iran**Abstract:**

**Introduction:** Academic performance of students is affected by various factors, such as study habits and skills. Thus, this research was conducted to investigate the status of study habits of students of Iranian medical sciences universities through a simple review.

**Materials and Methods:** This research was a simple review conducted in 2017 to investigate the status of study habits of Iranian medical sciences students. Research data were collected through searching the papers published in Internet resources and scientific databases, such as (SID, MAGIRAN, PubMed, Scopus and Web of Science) and searching three terms of study habits, students, and medical sciences without any linguistic and time limitation. In the initial search, 12 related papers were found, which 7 of them completely related to our research, were used.

**Results:** Research results revealed that the status of study skills and habits of students in Iranian University of Medical Sciences was at the moderate level.

**Discussion and Conclusion:** Given the importance of study habits in the academic performance and achievement of people, planning to improve the students' study methods and habits is essential. Providing a course under title of "study habits and skills" in the students' curriculum can be effective in this regard.

**Keywords:** Study habits, Students, Medical Sciences, Iran.

**\*Corresponding author:****Abdolreza Gilavand,**Expert on Faculty Appointments,  
Department of Education Development Center,  
Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences,  
Ahvaz, Iran. [gilavand\\_a@ajums.ac.ir](mailto:gilavand_a@ajums.ac.ir)

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**INTRODUCTION:**

Iran's civilization has a history of 1746 years in the medical sciences. Based on UNESCO World Organization, the first medical sciences university was founded 1756 years ago, named Jundishapur in the southwestern part of Iran (1). Research suggests that the students' learning approaches, which include study habits or skills, also predict the achievement of a student or a learner (2). Moreover, it has been proven that using diverse study methods and skills in different parts of the world improves the students' learning (3). Relying on the study conducted by Stark, Nourian et al (2006) state that students' participation in academic seminars in the area of reading skills (writing letter, research techniques, note-taking techniques, and time management) enhances the rate of learning scientific materials (4). Medical sciences universities are places to train specialist and committed personnel needed for any community in the health and medical areas (5-6). Many elites are attracted by Iranian Medical Universities to continue studying (7-8) or to be recruited as faculty members (9-10). Along with development of science, learning it requires time and planning. It is obvious that the lack of selecting appropriate study method not only causes the loss of energy and time, but also it leads to bad habits. It could be one of the important causes for academic lag and it can also distract most students and affect their performance in exams. In each educational system, the level of "academic achievement" of students is one of the indicators of success in academic activities. Assessing the level of academic achievement and the factors affecting it are among the main issues, drawn the attention of researchers. Thus, it is necessary to identify and institutionalize effective learning and study methods to enhance the academic achievement of students and improve the accuracy, speed, and quality of reading and comprehension. In this regard, recognizing study skills and approaches is essential. Hence, this research was conducted to examine the study habits among students of Iranian medical sciences universities in order to evaluate study skills in order to promote the educational goals of universities and educational centers in Iran.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS:**

This research was a simple review conducted in 2017 to examine the status of study habits among Iranian medical sciences students. Research data were collected through searching papers published in Internet resources and scientific databases including (SID, MAGIRAN, PubMed, Scopus and Web of Science) and with searching three terms of study habits, students, and medical sciences without any language and time restrictions. In the initial search, 12 related studies were found, which

7 of them seven related completely to this research were used in this research.

**RESULTS:**

In our country, there are a few studies on study habits of students, which we refer to some of them: Khadivzadeh et al (2004) conducted a research to examine study strategies and learning of Mashhad University of Medical Sciences students and its relationship with their individual characteristics and academic record and comparing the profile of study strategies and learning of students in Mashhad with the normative sample of American students. In this descriptive-analytical research, 412 first to third-year students in medical sciences, dental and pharmaceutical fields of study were selected using stratified random sampling method. The Vinstein's questionnaire of learning and study strategies, including 10 domains was completed by students. The profile of learning and study strategies of students was compared with normative sample table of American students. The research findings were as follows: The median scores of students in the three scales of test, attitude, and anxiety control strategies had the highest values with values of 33, 32 and 31 (out of maximum score of 40), respectively, and in selecting the main idea, the lowest score was equal to 19.

The median scores of different domains of students' study and learning strategies in different fields of study did not differ significantly. The students' scores in the 80th percentile test strategies and in the control of anxiety and concentration were equivalent to the 75th percentile and in motivational activities were equivalent to the percentile of 15 normative students of the United States (11). In another study conducted by Nourian et al. (2006) on 220 medical students in Zanjan to examine their study skills used the researcher-developed questionnaire. They reported that cases such as time management, concentration during study, and note-taking during the study are the among the most commonly used study methods in investigated students. The median scores for each of the study skills and habits were obtained 2.75, 2.25, 1.75, and 1.5 out of 4 for time management, concentration during the study, study speed, study note-taking, and reading comprehension domains, respectively (4).

In the research conducted by Fereiduni Moghadam et al (2009) under title of study habits and its relationship with educational performance in students of Abadan Nursing Faculty, 150 students were studied. This research results showed that the mean  $\pm$  SD of student habits was  $48.26 \pm 11.6$  out of 88 (maximum score), and 3.11% of students had un desirable study habits, 80.7% had relatively desirable study habits, and 8% had desirable study

habits. There was a positive, weak, and significant relationship between the mean score of study habits of students and their academic performance ( $r = 0.27$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) and there was no significant relationship between the study habits of students and their academic semester, age, and marital status. In general, the study habits of the investigated students at were moderate level and it could be stated that their study method has no desirable quality (12).

Torabi et al. (2014) investigated the study habits and skills in students. This cross-sectional-descriptive study was carried out on students of Kerman Dental School. Data were collected using researcher-developed questionnaire based on the Cook Skill Skills and Habits Questionnaire. It included 5-option 24 questions (including 6 domains) based on the Likert scale, in which higher score represents the better study habits. The questionnaire was completed by students. The data were analyzed using SPSS software and linear regression analysis at a significant level of 0.05. Findings revealed that 75 males (48.1%), 81 females (51.9%), 121 single students (77.6%) and 35 married students (29.5%) participated in the research. The mean age of students was  $23.46 \pm 6.9$  years. The mean score of the questionnaire was  $71.32 \pm 10.65$  out of 120 scores. Significant relationship was found between the mean of total students ( $P = 0.049$ ), mean of study hours ( $P = 0.033$ ) and study before class ( $P = 0.050$ ) and mean score of questionnaire. Study skills and habits were reported desirable in 7.7% of students, moderate in 85.9% of students, and weak in 6.4% of students. Daily study of 51.9% of the students during the semester was 2 hours and 46.8% of them had more than 8 hours of study during the exams (13).

Alamdar et al (2015) conducted a research to investigate the study methods of students in Rafsanjan University of Medical Sciences. In a cross-sectional study, 508 students were selected using random stratified method and Palsane and Shrama Study Habit Inventory (PSSHI) was used in this regard. Each student completed the questionnaire in self-reporting way. Then, data were entered into SPSS software and analyzed by statistical tests such as Chi-square test and Fisher's exact test. Results revealed that the minimum and maximum scores of study habits were 23 and 78, respectively. The status of study habits in the studied samples showed that 24 (7.4%) had undesirable status, 416 (81.9%) had relatively desirable status, and 68 (13.4%) had desirable status. The domain of reading ability had reverse and significant relationship with the mean of sleep hours per day ( $P = 0.040$ ), while the variable of age showed direct and significant relationship with learning motivation ( $P = 0.004$ ).

From their perspective, status of study habits of students of Rafsanjan University of Medical Sciences was evaluated at moderate level (14). Tarshizi et al (2012) investigated the study habits of 170 students of Birjand University of Medical Sciences. This cross-sectional study was conducted on 238 students studying in different fields of study in Birjand University of Medical Sciences in 2010. The stratified random sampling method was used and the data were collected using PSSHI. Findings revealed that the mean score of students' study habits was  $45.07 \pm 7.81$  out of 90 (maximum score). Moreover, 32.8% of students had poor study habits, 31.1% had moderate study habits, 14.3% had were good and 21.8% had very good study habits. A positive, weak and significant relationship was found between the mean score of study habits and their academic performance. Additionally, significant relationship was found between some of the domains of study habits of students and gender, educational level, study time, preparation time for preparation, study resources and education level of fathers, but no significant relationship was not found between them and living place, marital status, and maternal education level. Finally, the researchers concluded that the study habits of students in Birjand University of Medical Sciences were at moderate level, which their study method did not have good quality (15).

Zarezadeh et al examined the study habits of students of Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences in the academic year 2012-2013. The study population was determined to be 324, but a total of 245 questionnaires were analyzed. The data were collected using Palsane and Sharma Study Habits Inventory (PSSHI) and analyzed by SPSS software. Results indicated that the mean total score of students' study habits was  $45.8 \pm 11.1$  out of 90. The mean score in female students was  $46.1 \pm 11.44$  and  $45.4 \pm 10.8$  in male students, which significant difference was not seen between these two groups ( $p = 0.026$ ,  $t = 0.049$ ). Comparing the different domains of study habits in two different genders revealed that female students were superior to male students in domains of note-taking ( $t=2.46$  and  $p=0.015$ ) and health ( $t = 2.20$ ,  $p=0.028$ ). In addition, findings revealed that the students using book and pamphlet simultaneously as a source of study have a better study status compared to students using books or pamphlets, and this difference is statistically significant ( $p = 0/001$ ). The research results showed that the status of study habits and skills of students of Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences is at moderate level, which is similar to that of students of other medical universities of the country (16).

Hashemi et al conducted a study to examine the relationship between study habits and the ambiguity tolerance power and hyperactivity of students. This research was a correlational type of descriptive study performed on 250 master students of Gorgan Azad University in 2015 using sampling method. The tools used in this research included McLean ambiguity tolerance test, self-attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder scale, and study habits questionnaire PSSHI. Based on this research results, the mean of study habits was 45.2 (8.9) out of 90 (maximum score), and 4.4% of students had undesirable study habits, 88.3% of them had relatively desirable study habits, and 5.6% had desirable study habits. In addition, no significant relationship was found between the study habits and students' hyperactivity ( $P = 199$ ) and between ambiguity tolerance and hyperactivity of students ( $P = 0.151$ ). It was concluded that there was no significant relationship between study habits and ambiguity tolerance and hyperactivity (17).

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research findings showed that the status of students' study skills and habits in Iran University of Medical Sciences is at moderate level. Academic performance of people is influenced by different factors, including study habits and skills. Findings of the studies conducted by Seif and Diseth revealed a significant correlation between deep approach and academic achievement while negative correlation between surface approach and academic achievement (19, 18). Roshanaee showed a positive and significant relationship between a deep approach and preference for reading comprehension and a surface approach and preference for representation of information (20). Hagani and Seif et al reported that study skills and strategies can be trained and learned (21, 22). Chin also reported that some students are more successful in learning science compared to others. This difference is related to the method of their learning (23). Findings of the research conducted by Shokri et al showed a relationship between learning approaches and academic achievement, and this relationship is significant only in the surface learning approach (24). Kim et al also reported that learning strategies in medical students are related to their goals (25). In the studies conducted on study habits and level of their academic performance out of Iran, Streveler et al (2003) investigated 285 successful students in Colorado by using a descriptive-analytical method and 42-item researcher-developed questionnaire. They reported a significant relationship between study habits and the academic achievement of these students. In this research, one of the factors, which showed high relationship with desirable performance of the person in the university was specific study methods, included the items such as

note-taking during the study, highlighting the most important cases, summarizing the materials, and asking question before the exam. In this research, one of the factors which showed reverse relationship with performance of people in the exams was anxiety (3). Another study was conducted by Derossis et al (2004) to evaluate the study habits of surgery residents preparing themselves for the annual board American exams. The sample size in this study included 59 people. The sample size in this research was 59 people and data collection tool included study habits and attitudes questionnaire. Findings of this research also showed a significant relationship between the study habits in surgery residents and their scored obtained in the board exams ( $r = 0.29$ ,  $p < .05$ ) (2). Having regular curriculum and proper use of study skills play crucial role in students' achieving to educational needs. Thus, given the importance of study habits in the academic performance and achievement of people, it is necessary to plan to improve students' study methods and habits. Providing a course under title of study skills and habits in the students' curriculum can also be effective in this regard.

### Ethical considerations

Ethical issues were completely observed by the authors.

**Conflicts of interest:** None declared

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