



# **The Relationship between Socio-demographic and Lifestyle Factors and Academic Performance**

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## **Dear Editor-in-Chief**

Academic performance of students is the outcome of several determining factors that can eventually affect their final achievement (1). Detecting these factors may help to distinguish relevant elements that influence the students' performance and assist to ascertain those that can be precisely applied to them (2). Limited data are available from the UAE, in relation to the determinants of university students' academic performance (3). The objective of this study was to evaluate the relationship between the socio-demographic and life style factors and academic performance of health science students

This cross-sectional study was conducted including health science students in Ajman, UAE, between September 2013 and March 2014. A validated pilot tested self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data, which contained questions about demographic factors, lifestyle and academic history. Academic performance was defined as self-reported grade achieved in the previous academic year, accordingly the students' achievements were identified as excellent ( $\geq 85\%$ ), good (75-84%), and poor  $< 75\%$ . Self-evaluated time management skills were rated on a scale of 1-10 and then were grouped into excellent (7-10), moderate (4-6), and poor (1-3).

The study was ethically approved and informed consent was taken from participants. The SPSS version 20 (Chicago, IL, USA) was used to analyze the data and  $X^2$  test was used to test the significance of association. A  $P$  value of  $< 0.05$  was accepted as a significant level.

The study included 277 respondents aged between 18 and 32 yr, with 88 males (32%) and 189 females (68%). Most of the respondents' grades (44.7%) were between 75% and 84%. Better performance was seen more frequently amongst females ( $P=0.023$ ) (Table1) and among students with excellent time management skills ( $P<0.001$ ) (Table 2). Higher frequency of excellent academic performance was noticed among student who had received parental support and had good sleep. Socioeconomic status was not significantly associated with academic performance (Table1).

Higher satisfaction with academic performance was associated with better performance ( $P<0.001$ ) (Table2). Students who perceived a need for help with their studies performed worse than those who did not ( $P<0.001$ ) (table2).

The better performance of females in this study is in agreement with data from Turkey (3) that has been linked with variation in the attendance.

**Table 1:** The Association between Academic Performance and Socio Demographic Factors

Variables	Groups	≥85%		75 –84%		<75%		Total	P value
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Gender	Male	24	27.6%	34	39.1	29	33.3	87	P=0.023
	Female	64	34.4%	88	47.3	34	18.3	186	
Age (yr)	≤20	56	34.4	76	46.6	31	19.0	163	NS
	>20	32	29.1	46	41.8	32	29.1	110	
Living status	With family	55	35.5	64	41.3	36	23.2	155	NS
	Independently	33	28.0	58	49.2	27	22.9	118	
Socio-economic Status	Middle/Lower	43	35.0	53	43.1	27	22.0	123	NS
	Higher middle/Higher	39	27.7	68	48.2	34	24.1	141	
Involved in Romantic Relationship	No	54	32.5	76	45.8	36	21.7	166	NS
	Yes	34	31.8	46	43.0	27	25.2	107	
Parental encouragement	No	3	15.0	10	50.0	7	35.0	20	NS
	Yes	66	33.8	84	43.1	45	23.1	195	
Sleeping hours per day	<8	56	30.8	79	43.4	47	25.8	182	NS
	≥8	31	34.8	42	47.2	16	18.0	89	
Smoking	No	78	33.6	106	45.7	48	20.7	232	NS
	Yes	9	23.1	16	41.0	14	35.9	39	

**Table 2:** The association between academic performances and the perceived time management, satisfaction and need for additional help

Variables	Groups	≥85		75 –84		<75		Total	P value
		No.	%	No	%	No.	%		
Time management	Poor	11	36.7	9	30.0	10	33.3	30	P=0.001
	Moderate	51	27.4	85	45.7	50	26.9	186	
skills	Excellent	26	48.1	26	48.1	2	3.7	54	P<0.001
Satisfaction with academic performance	Satisfied	57	50.0	50	43.9	7	6.1	114	
	Dissatisfied	31	19.6	72	45.6	55	34.8	158	P<0.001
Perceive the need for additional help with studies	No	66	40.5	74	45.4	23	14.1	165	
	Yes	22	20.2	48	44.0	39	35.8	109	P<0.001

The better performance of students who had parental encouragement and good sleep is supported by studies from Australia (4) and Saudi Arabia (5) respectively, and despite the importance of both variables, they failed to show significant association with the performance in this study.

Time management becomes a crucial requirement of better academic performance. This was evident in this study, and support findings of other researchers (6). Academic help seeking behaviour of students should be encouraged by faculties and administration, since it can support the academic

performance of students (7). The present data demonstrated that students who perceived a need for academic support have a genuine need and should be encouraged to reflect their needs

Gender and time management skills are significant determinant of higher academic performance. Perceived need for academic help is an indicator of poor performance. Parental support and good sleep were reported more among students with high academic performance. Socioeconomic status was not found to be a significant predictor of students' academic performance.

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