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Study habits of health sciences students in a selected university: A cross-sectional study

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Abstract --- Study habits have an impact on students' capacity for learning. Amongst these, the technology use has implicit a controversial part. This study aimed to assess the study habits of university students and the role of technology in learning. A cross sectional survey was conducted. A simple random sampling technique of 301 students from the different colleges of the selected university was used. A self-administered developed questionnaire about the students' demographic data, their study habits including time management, study environment, study techniques, test preparation, device used for studying, number of hours per day spent on technology and how technology enhances learning. The findings revealed that most of students preferred to use laptop for learning. Around half of them spent 2-5 hours every day on technology for studying purpose. There was a statistical significant difference between gender, nationality and different element of the students study habits as time management and methods of studying as teacher notes and attending the revision classes. More than textbooks, students rely on technology for their academic work. The use of

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technology to enhance university students' psychomotor and linguistic abilities, including communication skills that are crucial for the health care team, can be the subject of further research.

Keywords---study habits, technology, university students, cross-sectional study.

Introduction

The primary goal of education centers is to enhance and increase learners' capacity for learning (1). Numerous factors influence the quantity and quality of learning as well as how well students retain what they have learned. Individual intelligence, physical and mental health, motivation and interest in subjects, peace, quiet, and amenities in the living environment, educational facilities, co-teaching resources, and cognitive abilities are some of these aspects. On the other hand, psychologists have found the greatest effective one to be general study skills (2).

Study skills are the abilities and practices required for learning and gathering information (3). A 'habit' is a regular routine that is difficult to give away. A practice that is difficult to break is referred to as a "habit." The term "study habit" refers to a student's regular routine for accomplishing academic duties such as attending classes, taking notes, studying outside of class, revising, and submitting assignments etc. (4). Academics contend that study habits are something that can be taught and passed on (5). Researchers reported that one may predict a learner's success or failure based on their approach to learning, which includes their study habits (6).

The way student study affects their ability to learn and their use of technology. Devices are one of the most important things that might affect study habits. According to a recent study funded by McGraw-Hill Education, the usage of mobile devices and online activities can aid the study process, but they can also have a negative impact. In relation to this study, approximately 40% of the students who were surveyed identified online activities as their primary source of distraction. Additionally, more than 50% of those surveyed admitted to using their laptops, tablets, and phones to text pals while they were studying (7). However, the same survey also revealed that students utilize technology most commonly smartphones rather than tablets or computers for their academic purposes (7).

It is essential to apply study skills in an educational setting. As students in the health sciences fields of medicine, dentistry, nursing, midwifery, and surgical technology have many class discussions and a variety of subjects and education material to memorize that require a lot of time and energy. When dealing with a variety of novel and challenging materials in the field of patient diagnosis, treatment, and care, it is crucial to have a plan for education. It is clear that choosing the wrong study strategy wastes time and energy and encourages students to develop poor study habits, which can ultimately make them lose interest in learning and fill them with anxiety (2).

Students' study habits are directly correlated with their academic performance in addition to being dependent on their own preferences and circumstances (8). It is usually acknowledged that a student has strong study habits if he or she is able to perform well on his or her tests. Therefore, a student's study habits are the way he manages his time to get the grades he wants (9). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to assess students' study habits and technology use of the university students, to identify the students' study habits' strengths and weaknesses, since their development and change might help move education forward. An important first step in advancing education is recognizing study patterns and locating students who perform poorly.

Materials and Methods

A cross-sectional descriptive study was carried out during the academic year 2018/2019. The population included the students of medical, dentistry, pharmacy and nursing colleges of RAK Medical and Health Sciences University, Ras al Khaimah Emirate, UAE. The 1225 pupils who were targeted, with a prediction 99% degree of confidence and a 5% confidence interval. Sample size was 301 people. After selecting the first name using the Blind Method, a straightforward random sample procedure was used to select every other third name from the list.

Data was collected through a self- administered developed questionnaire after reviewing the literatures that validated and distributed to the students of the four colleges in the presence of the faculty. Questionnaire included three sections, the first of which contained demographic data as gender, nationality, medium of education I high school. Second section was on students study habits in the form of time management (8 items), study environment (4 items), learning methods (8 items), methods of study (7 items) and preparation of exams (4 items). It is a 3 items Likert scale with the following scores: never = 1, sometimes = 2, always = 3. The third segment included the type of device used for studying, the number of hours per day spent on technology, and how technology may enhance learning. Pilot study was conducted on 30 students (not included in the study) to test the questionnaire to ensure its suitability for data collection.

RAK Medical and Health Sciences University Research Ethics Committee approval reference number: RAKMHSU-REC-022-2018– F–GE was obtained to conduct the study. The participants were explained about the process of research and data collection. They were told that there was no requirement for names or identification and that participation was entirely voluntary. They received assurances that the data was confidential and anonymous. The volunteers had the right to discontinue their participation at any moment and without providing a reason. After obtaining their written consent, distributed the questionnaires to the students selected based on the simple random method from different levels in the colleges. The data was collected, entered, and analyzed under strict confidentiality guidelines, and they are only to be used for research.

The data was collected and analyzed with SPSS version 24. The data was presented in the form of number and Percentage. Chi-Square test used to find out the relation between selected demographic data as gender and nationality with

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the different elements of study habits in the form of time management, study environment, methods of study and preparation of exams. If the minimum expected cell frequency is more than five, therefore the assumption of chi-square has not been violated while if the minimum expected cell frequency is less than five, therefore the assumption of chi-square has been violated. Fischer exact test was performed to determine if there was a significant association between gender and listening to lectures attentively. The level of significance adopted was 0.05.

Results

Demographic data revealed that out of the total sample (n=301), the percentage for females is 67.5%, and for males is 32.5%, therefore there is a higher proportion of females in the study. The Arab population comprised more than two-thirds (70.4%) of the study sample. The maximum number of students (37.5%) from the College of Medicine, (30.2%) from Dental College, as compared to (13.0%) from Pharmacy College, and (19.3%) from the Nursing College. More than half of the students, (56.1%) studied in English Medium schools as seen in (Table 1).

Variables		N=301	%				
Gender	Male	98	32.5				
	Female	203	67.5				
Nationality	Arab	212	70.4				
Nationality	Non-Arab	89	29.6				
	Medical	113	37.5				
Callaga	Nursing	58	19.3				
College	Dental	91	30.2				
	Pharmacy	39	<u>30.2</u> 13.0				
Medium of Education	Arabic	132	43.9				
(Secondary School)	English	169	56.1				
	1 st	53	17.6				
	2 nd	72	23.9				
Year of Study	3 rd	47	15.6				
	4 th	95	31.6				
	5 th	34	11.3				

Table1:	Demogra	phic (data d	of study	group
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Figure 1: Favored devices used for studying

Favored device used for learning

Most of the students (84.3%) preferred to use laptops for learning compared to 61.4% who did not prefer mobiles or tablets (Figure 1).



Figure 2: Number of hours spent using technology to support learning

Twenty-five percent of the students utilized more than 5 hours on technology compared to 47.4% and 26% of students who spent 2-5 hours and less than 2 hours on technology (Figure 2).



Figure (3) Role of technology in improving learning experience

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The majority of the students (93.5%) agreed that the use of technology improved their overall learning experience (Figure 3).

Time management

As seen in table (2), 21.5% of the female students always, prepared a schedule at the beginning of the semester, while 23.4 % never made a schedule. For males, only 18.8 % always prepared the schedule while 36.5% never prepared a schedule. The proportion of female students who made the schedule is higher than the male students, yet it is not statistically significant x2 (2, n = 301) = 5.61, p= .060, phi= .136. The Cramer's Phi value is .136, which is considered a small effect using Cohen's criteria.

The percentage of Arab students who adhered to the prepared schedule sometimes is 44.9% and among non-Arabs is 48.9%, whereas 27.5% and 36.2% of the Arabs and non-Arabs respectively never adhered to the prepared schedule. The proportion of non-Arab students who adhered to the schedule is higher than the Arab students and is statistically significant x^2 (2, n = 301) = 6.19, p=.045, phi= .143. The Cramer's Phi value is .143, which is considered a small effect using Cohen's criteria.

The percentage within gender for female students who preferred to always study at night is 54.6% and for males is 52.1%, therefore there is a slightly higher proportion of females who always preferred to study at night than male students and is statistically significant x^2 (2, n = 301) = 6.02, p=.049, phi= .141. The Cramer's Phi value is .141, which is considered a small effect using Cohen's criteria.

Around two-third 62.4% of non-Arab students attend the visits and or rotations regularly, while 16.1% never attended visits and or rotations. Among Arab students, 47.2% attended the rotations while 14.2% never attended the visits or rotations. The proportion of non-Arab students who attended the visits or rotations was higher than Arab students and is statistically significant x^2 (2, n = 301) = 8.50, p <0.05, phi= .171. The Cramer's Phi value is .171, which is considered a small effect using Cohen's criteria.

	Gender										Natio	nality			01-:	
Items		Male			Female		Chi	p		Arab			Non-Arab		Chi	p
I preier to :	Never	Sometimes	Always	Never	Sometimes	Always	Square	value	Never	Sometimes	Always	Never	Sometimes	Always	Square	value
Prepare a study schedule in the beginning of semester	35	43	18	48	113	44	5.61	0.060	53	112	42	30	44	20	1.62	0.44
Stick to the prepared schedule	30	48	18	61	91	53	1.89	0.33	57	93	57	34	46	14	6.19	0.045*
Study at night	15	31	50	14	79	112	6.02	0.049*	17	76	114	12	34	48	1.58	0.45
Study early in the morning	18	44	34	39	112	54	2.82	0.24	36	117	54	21	39	34	5.90	0.052
Meet the due date of assigned work on time	8	24	64	5	52	148	5.54	0.06	11	59	137	2	17	75	5.99	0.050*
Attend my lecture classes regularly	7	23	66	14	42	148	0.96	0.81	16	40	151	5	25	63	4.64	0.20
Attend rotation/field visit regularly	13	27	52	30	69	99	1.23	0.74	28	76	93	15	20	58	8.50	0.01*
Utilize free time between classes to study	29	50	17	49	114	41	1.79	0.61	50	121	35	28	43	23	5.07	0.16

Table 2: Relation between time Management and selected variables

Study Environment

As seen in table 3, 44.4% of females always attentively listen to lectures while 0.5% never listened to lectures. Among males, 46.9% attentively listened to lectures and 3.1% never paid attention during lectures. The proportion of males was higher than that of females, listening to lectures attentively. Yet it is not statistically significant x2 (2, n = 301) = 3.83, P=0.14.

The second			Geı	ıder			01-1	Nationality				Chi				
Items		Male		Female			Chi	p Value		Arab			Non-Arab		Chi	p Value
i preier m:	Never	Sometimes	Always	Never	Sometimes	Always	Square	value	Never	Sometimes	Always	Never	Sometimes	Always	Square	value
listen to the lectures attentively	3	48	45	1	113	91	3.83	0.14	4	112	91	0	49	45	2.08	0.35
have a designated area that is free of noise and distraction	14	35	47	15	79	111	3.99	0.13	21	76	110	8	38	48	0.46	0.79
study in the library	3	48	45	1	113	91	3.83	0.14	49	118	40	14	55	25	3.98	0.13
Others	79	9	8	151	28	26	2.70	0.25	147	33	27	83	4	7	11.5	0.003*

Table 3: Relation between study environment and selected variables

Methods of Studying

As seen in the table (4), 42.9% of females always utilized textbooks while 18.6% never used textbooks for studying. Among the male students, 44.8% used textbooks whereas 25% never used textbooks for studying. The proportion of males using textbooks for studying was not statistically significant compared to the females, x^2 (2, n = 301) = 5.338, p=.069, phi= 0.133. The Phi coefficient value is 0.133, which is considered a small effect using Cohen's criteria.

Table 4: Relation between preferred methods of studying and selected variables

			Ge	ender												
Items I prefer to :		Male		Female			Chi Square	p Value		Arab			Non-Arab	Chi Square	p Value	
	Never	Sometimes	Always	Never	Sometimes	Always			Never	Sometimes	Always	Never	Sometimes	Always		
my personal copy of textbook	24	29	43	32	85	88	5.33	0.06	44	86	77	12	28	54	10.96	0.004*
Library copy	25	47	24	36	125	44	4.33	0.11	48	118	41	13	54	27	5.07	0.07
e-book	29	35	30	54	82	56	3.29	0.34	56	80	59	27	37	27	0.95	0.81
Lectures/Ppt.	2	11	80	3	33	155	3.20	0.36	4	26	163	1	18	72	3.71	0.29
Journals	39	39	12	73	83	34	1.26	0.73	74	84	32	38	38	14	1.84	0.60
Teachers notes	8	29	59	5	51	147	7.89	0.048*	8	58	140	5	22	66	1.22	0.74
Revision classes	11	35	50	9	69	127	6.14	0.046*	15	79	113	5	25	64	4.86	0.08

Learning methods that helped the students to understand the subject better

As seen in table (5), 45.6% of females always understood the subject better with TBL while 18.1% felt that they never understood the subject better with TBL. Among the male students, 42.6% always understood the subject with TBL whereas 18.9% never understood the subject with TBL. The proportion of females who always understood the subject with TBL was not statistically significant compared to the males, x2 (2, n = 300) = 0.998, p=.607.

There was no major statistical significance noted in relation between gender and learning methods that helped the students to understand the subject better as lecture talk, Case- Based Learning, Problem-Based Learning, Bed side teaching and concept mapping. There was no major statistical significance noted in relation between nationality and learning methods that helped the students to understand the subject better as lecture talk, power point / AV aids, Problem-Based Learning, Bed side teaching and concept mapping. While there was major statistical significance (p=0.004), (p=0.002) noted in relation between nationality and better learning methods to understand as Team-Based Learning and Case-Based Learning respectively.

Most 74.2% of the students felt that the power point / AV aids as a learning method helped them to understand the subject better, out of which 61.2% male students compared to 80.2% female students showing a statistical significance (p=0.001). Around 40.8% male students as compared to 58.2% female students understood the subject better in small group discussion showing a statistical significance (p=0.004).

Table 5: Relation	between learning	methods that	help the	students to	understand
	the subject be	tter and select	ed variat	oles	

			Gei	nder							Natio	nality				
Items I prefer to :		Male		Female			Chi Square	p Value		Arab			Non -Arab		Chi Square	p Value
	Never	Sometimes	Always	Never	Sometimes	Always			Never	Sometimes	Always	Never	Sometimes	Always		
Lecture Talk	4	34	58	3	76	126	2.11	0.34	6	82	119	1	28	65	4.082	0.13
PowerPoint/Audio visual Aids	4	32	60	1	37	167	15.10	0.001*	4	47	156	1	22	71	0.308	0.85
TBL (Team- based Learning)	22	34	40	37	74	93	0.99	0.60	51	71	84	8	37	49	10.97	0.004*
CBL (Case- based learning)	16	37	43	37	79	88	0.12	0.94	43	87	76	10	29	55	12.9	0.002*
PBL (Problem- based learning)	18	45	33	49	91	65	1.01	0.60	54	101	52	13	35	46	17.54	0.000*
Bed side Teaching	30	32	34	69	52	84	2.11	0.34	71	64	72	28	20	46		
Small group Discussion	12	44	40	9	75	121	11.26	0.004*	14	88	105	7	31	56	2.476	0.29
Concept Mapping	23	43	30	38	90	77	1.69	0.42	42	91	74	19	42	33	2.56	0.27

Preparation for the exam

As seen in table (6), only 28.1% of male students always revised the lessons every day while 19.8% never did. Among the female students, 19.5% always revised the lessons every day while 19.0% did not revise lessons every day. The proportion of male students who revised the lessons every day was not statistically significant compared to the female students, x2 (2, n = 301) = 3.183, p=.204. Out of the total 306 participants, only 38 (12.4%) of students never prepared for the exam much in advance while 159 (52.8%) sometimes started preparation for the exam much in advance and 104 (33.9) always prepared. There was no major statistical significance noted in relation between nationality, gender and preferred method to prepare for exam. Only 106 (34.6%) of students stated preparation a day before the exam, out of which 42 (42.8%) male students compared to 64 (30.7%) female students showing a statistical significance (p=0.051).

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	The sec						C1 ·				Natio	nality			01 ·	
Items		Male			Female		Chi	p	Arab Non- Arab					Chi	p V-1	
I preier In:	Never	Sometimes	Always	Never	Sometimes	Always	Square	value	Never	Sometimes	Always	Never	Sometimes	Always	Square	value
start my preparation much in advance	17	47	32	21	112	72	3.34	0.18	22	107	78	16	52	26	4.13	0.12
start my preparation a day before the exam	28	26	42	59	82	64	5.95	0.05	58	69	80	29	39	26	3.59	0.16
study only selected important topics for the exam	22	46	28	56	89	60	0.78	0.67	52	90	65	26	45	23	1.50	0.47
study all the topics included	12	24	60	12	55	158	3 03	0.14	10	40	130	5	30	59	3.07	0.21

Table 6: Relation between preferred method to prepare for exam and selected variables

Discussion

The results of the current study demonstrate a substantial relationship between student study habits and technology. This conclusion is backed by (10) the notion that technology must be used and integrated into routine clinical and basic science tasks. According to the current study's findings, more than 50% of the students made a schedule and tried to stick to it for the most part. The majority of study participants liked to study at night. A significant percentage of students—70.0%—met the due dates for the tasks they were assigned, which is a very encouraging attitude. This findings is matches with the study by (11) that found 68.31% of respondents consistently met due dates for assigned work is interesting to note. According to the survey, about equal numbers of students preferred studying in groups and alone (57.5% and 56.9%, respectively), which is in contrast to the research done by (12) where a higher percentage than 54.1% of students chose to study alone but just under 50% did so in groups. Additionally, the present survey discovered that 76.8% of students used the lectures and power points whereas just 42.8% of students used their personal textbooks in college. This is contrast to (12) did a study at a university in Italy where the majority of pupils used their textbooks. According to the recent study, the majority of students favored using laptops for learning. The majority of students (61.4%) and (64.1%) did not choose to use their mobile or tablet for studying, respectively, and there was no statistically significant relationship between the students' gender, nationality, or preferred device for studying, especially for exams. Similar to a study (13) in which over 86% of participants used a laptop for studying, 85.7% of students at this university opted to use laptops rather than mobile devices. Internet and computers are tools that are even more frequently used for educational purposes. According to results from a separate study of 1228 college students in the United States performed in 2014, laptops and notebooks were the most frequently utilized mobile device for schoolwork on a weekly basis (89%) (14). Additionally, the overwhelming majority of students interviewed agreed that using digital tools, particularly tablets, will change the way that learning is done in the future and make it more enjoyable (14). According to the results of the recent study, 47.4% of students use technology for study purposes for 2 to 5 hours every day. This is in covenant with (12) indicated that the majority of students answered to use computers and the Internet up to 21 hours per week. These results are also supported by (15) the results of a survey administered to 549 undergraduate college students at a highly selective Midwestern university found that 95% of the students admitted to using the Internet every day, with their main uses being emailing, browsing the web, chatting, and, to a lesser extent, conducting research. In the current study, nearly 93.5% of students said that technology enhanced their entire educational experience. This is consistent with (16), which found that the vast majority of students interviewed agreed that using digital tools would change how learning is done in the future and make it more enjoyable. According to a survey conducted at the University of Buea in the academic year 2009-2010, Cameroonian students there believe that computers are a positive addition to the learning process since they make learning easier (17). This contrasts with (18), which examined perceived stress, technology use and disruptions, and social support among undergraduate students. In that study, a quarter of the participants reported that technology had interfered with them in undertaking or finishing their schoolwork. Although the scientists have noted that most of the interruption was created during stressful days when students tend to contact with family or friends, this disruption was primarily induced by instant messaging.

The current study's findings suggest that time management, the study environment, learning strategies, and study methods are each responsible for the students' difficulties in a variety of study habits. This is consistent with (2, 8, 19), which illustrated a variety of issues with time management. To address this problem, the students should engage in activities with the goal of attempting to lessen the interfering elements that undermine their concentration and cause them to waste time while studying. Our survey paints a picture of how university students use technology and their study habits.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study investigated the study habits of students attending a medical and health sciences university in the UAE Students. Study habits have been significantly impacted by technology. Instead of using text books for their education, students rely on technology. To fully comprehend the impact of the technological revolution on students' health and performance, more research is required. It is therefore advised to carry out additional research in this area with different student demographics in order to clarify and illustrate the numerous facets of this issue, given the substantial importance of study and learning habits.

Author contributions

All co-authors have involved in all stages of this study while preparing the final version. They all agree with the results and conclusions.

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