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Academic Performance of Undergraduate Students at Soran University in Northern Iraq

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze factors (social demographic, social education, spend time) affecting academic performance through university students in Northern Iraq. The sample comprised of 400 university students of the Soran University in 2015. Their responses to the "factors" and degree for the past semester were collected and analyzed using methods containing descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression analysis. The conclusions suggested score of students is positive and strongly related to faculty and score of high school. Furthermore, education level of mother is also positively correlated to students' academic performance. Score of students is negative and strongly related to age, class, size of household and employment status of students.

Keywords

Academic score, Sociodemographic factors, Erbil, achievements

I. Introduction

One of the most researched and debated factor among the educational professionals is socioeconomic status, besides other factors that contribute towards the students' academic performance. The most prevalent reasoning is that the learners' socioeconomic status affects their academic performances' quality. Most of the experts discuses that the low socioeconomic status has negative effect on the students' academic performance, because the students' basic needs stay unmet and therefore they do not perform better academically *[1]*. It ensures the knowledge acquisition and skills that make individuals enhance their productivity and improve their quality of life. This increase in productivity also leads to new sources of gaining that increase the country's economic growth *[2]*. Previous studies showed that gender has important effects on student performance. For example, *[3]* found that men have always performed better than women. Hence, he explained the relatively low performance of woman in the principles of Economics courses, even after adjusting for mathematics background. Moreover, admission points, socio-economic background and school environment are the major factors which influence students' academic performance*([4]-[6])*. *Reference [7]* argued that previous performance background is one of the key factors for future academic performance success. Parents' involvement in their child's education besides the social structure increases their child's level of academic success.

Further elaborated that student performance is very much dependent on socio-economic background as statistically important differences, connected to their gender, grade level as well as school environment and socio-economic background*[8]*. Schools are social institutions in which groups of individuals are brought together to contribute on educational experiences and such interplay may breed on learners positive or negative influences. School background in this study was characterized by location of school such as urban or rural, school ownership such as public or private schools, school academic status and school financial standing *[9]*. According to John Dewey, Educational reformer and philosopher, good quality education should have both a societal purpose and purpose for the individual student. And he claims that educators are answerable for providing students with experiences that are imperative and enable the students to impart knowledge or skills to society *[10]*. Students must study effectively and pass their exams in order to graduate. So, academic development has become an essential means for measuring academic progress, and there is a need for examination of the factors that affect that *[11]*. *Reference[12]*analyzed academic performance of undergraduate students by using data from 340 respondents, selected from Uganda Christian University, and used simple random sampling method. The researcher confirmed the research hypothesis that there is a positive connection between parents' socioeconomic status, former school background, admission credit points gained at level A, diploma level and academic performance of undergraduate students, and there is no relationship between matured age credits and academic presentation of undergraduate students. Parental factors such as socio-economic status of parents in terms of income, education, occupation nature and position in the society define the type of attention and involvement they have with their children as socio-economics. Moreover, they argued that socioeconomic has a great impact on the students' performance and their parents' background*[13]*. *Reference[14]*questionin his study,"Do students go to class? Should they?", provided the first analysis of the relation between academic performance and lecture attendance. Using attendance records in 6 sessions of his large (n = 195) Intermediate Macroeconomics lecture, he founded that attendance had a positive and significant effect on academic performance. These resultsrecommended experimenting with mandatory attendance policies to promote student performance. Many researches confirm that students' academic achievement is associated withsocio-economic condition of their parents which includes academic and professional qualification of parents, income and occupational affiliation. It means that the students from better socioeconomic background will perform better than the other students who have less financial opportunities. "Social and economic status of a student is generally determined by combining the qualification of parents, occupation and income standard" *[15]*. Socio-economic status is one of the main elements studied while predicting academic performance according to many research studies conducted on academic achievement. *Reference[16]* Conducted a survey on socio-economic factors in Nigeria. They indicated some important factors which influence the performance of students. The study revealed that insufficient parental income, type of family, and lack of funding by governments are the factors influencing academic performance students. Addict of internet is someone who couldn't control his or her use of the internet, which finally causes some psychological, social, schoolproblems, and/or work difficulties in a person's life" *[17]*.

*Reference[18]*analyzed factors affecting students' academic

achievement, of Songkla University. Sample of the study was composed of 100 students. Questionnaire was used as instruments comprised bio-social, affective and environmental factors. They used Z-score test and Binary logistic regression. Result was based on Binary logistic regression analysis, gender, the only one of bio-social factor; anxiety and responsibility of affective factors; and instruction quality, a kind of environmental factor have affected students' academic probation. *Reference[19]*investigated Student Satisfaction and Academic Performance, of Armenian Higher Education. Collected Data by questionnaire from 372 students, and ANOVA was utilized to determine significant group differences in relation to student satisfaction. The result indicated that satisfaction promotes academic performance and improved outcomes, the research agenda and discourse should turn to the capacity of administrators to promote improved student satisfaction and perhaps it is encouraging to them to know the potential impact, as described in this research, of efforts taken to improve campus climate and culture.

*Reference[20]*analyzed the factors affecting academic achievement of Tehran University by using data from 670 respondents, and reported that the background is the priority of researchers in academic achievement. Results of that study proved that academic achievement was affected by gender, educational level and school factors. *Reference[21]* found nearly thirty seven percent of high school students in Sanandaj, Iran had intense anxiety. Furthermore, *[22]*recordedthat thirty seven percent of male and fifty three percent of female high school students in Saghez city in Kurdistan Region had test-anxiety, and found a significant relationship between test-anxiety and academic achievement. On the other side, *[23*] found that fifty percent of non-Shayeds' high school students and sixty percent of Shayeds' high school students in Sanandaj had test-anxiety. Moreover, *[24]* found that test-anxiety was linked to distraction, and this has led tolow academic achievement.

*Reference[25]*detected that the challenge now for educational institutions is to create attitudes and guidelines on how relevant knowledge can be created, shared, and acquired. According to *[26]*, although the knowledge managementinitiatives in Iraqi universities are still in the early stage, it is highly possible to apply them as universities which are knowledge-based institutions. Unfortunately, very few studies have been conducted to study the knowledge creation possibility in the context of Iraqi Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). In the past, Iraqi higher education system was ranked the best in the Middle East and Gulf Region, and it was not until after the economic sanction, when Iraqi HEIs pained from a long period of relative isolation because of the sanctions mandatory by the UN *[27]*. According to the International Conference on Higher Education in Iraq, Iraqi universities have suffered too much from curricula, teaching methods, resources, modern technology and researches[28]. It was stressed that there is an urgent needs to achieve the lost glory to the Iraqi educational institutes.

A. State of the Problem

The prominence of education in an individual cannot be overstated. Education has a long permanent effect on one's life. Knowledge acquisition and skills and all other things that are valuables, which are transmitted to a person through regular and irregular education, determine his/her potential in future.Academic performance, measured by the test results, is one of the central goals of a school. *Reference[12]*said that schools are established in order to imparting flag and knowledge and skills to those who go through them and behind all of this idea of promoting good academic performance.Soran University whose vision is to be a center of excellence in the heart of Soran city is keen on quality assurance and repair and maintenance of standards. However, some pupils perform welland others do not. They are worried about those who do not lead well because of this poor performance without scruples, the university may lose its reputation, which may lead to loss of confidence in graduates of this university.The researcher would therefore like to prove the factors impacting academic performance of undergraduate students of Soran University, with specific reference to admission points,parents' socio-demographic and economic status, time spend on studying, residential area, working, sleeping, watching, and former school background.

B. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to find out if factors such asadmission points, parents' socio-demographic and economic status, residential area, time spend on studying, working, sleeping, watching, and former school background affect academic performance of undergraduate students at Soran University in Northern IraqRegion. So, these researches try to analyze the effect of those factors on student performance and to find out solution to increase students' performance.

II. Material and Methods

A. Research Area

Research area is the Soran city in which there is a city of the province Erbil, which is located in the north of Iraq. The field of study is located between latitudes (36° 24", 37° 11") in the north and longitudes (44° 15", 44° 54"). Iran is located at the east side of Soran city, at the north you can see Turkey and at the south and west there are other cities of Erbil.

The Soran University is located in the Erbil province of Northern Region of Iraq. The total number of students is 2351 (1301 males and 1050 females). And it has 5 faculties (Law: 244 students, Art: 1394 students, Education: 905 students, Science: 483 students, Engineering: 180 students). The Soran University is one of the 32 universities in Northern Region of Iraq, and its rank is 11 inNorthern Iraq and 9725 in the world.

B. Data collection

This study used simple random sampling that is section from probability sampling techniques. The provenance of data for the study was the primary data collected by use of questionnaire, for three classes (second, third, fourth) in the Soran University. A background Information consists of33 questions based on the demographic information, education, and the spent time. The data was gathered during regular-schedule class meeting times and lasted almost 10 minutes per class. Allparticipants gave their satisfaction for this research study. 430 students filled out the self-reported questionnaires. However, only 400 questionnaires were considered for the data analysis because of the fill out questionnaires. The academic session of 2015 was chosen for the study.

C. Data Analysis

This research used multiple linear regression analysis,which allows inclusion of any desired variable. Multiple linear regression analysis seeks to establish a relationship between a dependent variable (in this case student's academic performance) and two

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or more independent variables (the predictors). The regression model used to analyzed academic performance of students can be written as

$ScoreGPA = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \ldots + \beta_k X_n + \varepsilon_i$

Where β_0 is intercept; β_k is the regression slope or coefficient for a given independent variable *k*, and ε_i is error term for individual *i* based on a record of observations. This study includes 22 independent variables covering student's gender, age, marital status, working status, educational status of mother, score of high school, attendance, use of interne, watching TV, and household size.

The independent variables should have little or no correlation with each other to avoid problems caused by multicollinearity. In order to obtain valid results from the overall significance (F-test) of the equation and the significance of each regression coefficient (t-test), the residual ε has to be normally and independently distributed, with a mean of zero and a constant variance.

III. Result And Discussion

The summary statistics of respondent and the definitions of all variables used in the multiple linear regression equation are reported in Table 1. Average age of the respondents is about 22.1 years, and majority (60%) of respondents falls in the age group of 21-23 years. Majority of the respondents in the survey is males (52.8%) and around 90% of respondents are single.

Nearly 19% of respondents were students of the Faculty of Engineering and Science, and 79% of students from Art Science (49% Art, 24% Education and 9% Law). Nearly 46% of respondents were student of second class, and the least number of respondents (less than 24%) were student of fourth class and respondents less than 31% were student of third class. Nearly 95% of respondents were went to public school, and less than 1% of them were went to Private school and (less than 13%) of them were went to public utopian school.

Father work statusabout 56% of the students is employed, and that of the 34% has free enterprise, and that of the less than 11% is unemployed.Mother education level of approximately 60%, less than 36% and less than 5% of the students is unlettered, primary to high school, and academic education, respectively.

Average household size in research is found to be 7.2 and nearly 44% of respondents live in household with 5 to 7 persons, and about 43% of students lived an household more than 7 persons. 57% of respondents had monthly salary of less than 750000 dinar, and the 7% of respondents had more than 1500000 dinar.

Class attendance of nearly 87% of the students is good, and less than 13%is fair. The highest percentage of respondents (nearly 51%) was score of final between 60 to 70 degrees, and the least number of respondents (less than 5%) wasmore than 80.

Nearly 71% of respondents spent their time on watching TV between less than 2 hours, 67% of all observed spent their time on internet and social media between zero to 2 hours, 34% of students had spent their time to study between zero to 1 hour, and less than 11%,more than 3 hours. Nearly 68% of all students use the teacher-suggested references and about 32% don't use them.

Table. 1 : Definitions and sample statistics of effect factors variable

Variables	***Definition***	***Mean***	***Standard deviation***
AGE	Age of respondents	22.143	2.063
WORKF	Father work status (1:employed; 0:Unemployed)	0.553	0.498
ATTENDANCE	Attendance of respondents (1:Middle; 0:good)	0.135	0.342
SCOREHS2	Score of high school (1:equal and less than 60; 0:other)	0.230	0.421
SCOREHS3	Score of high school (1:between 60-69; 0:other)	0.503	0.501
SCOREHS4	Score of high school (1:between 70-79; 0:other)	0.223	0.416
SCOREHS5	Score of high school (1:more than equal80; 0:other)	0.045	0.208
EDUMOTHER2	Education level for mother (1:unlettered; 0:other)	0.595	0.492
EDUMOTHER3	Education level for mother (1:primary to high school; 0:other)	0.358	0.480
EDUMOTHER4	Education level for mother (1:academic education; 0:other)	0.048	0.213
GENDER	Gender (1:male; 2:female)	1.473	0.500
MARITAL	Marital Status (1:single; 2:married)	1.108	0.310
DFACULTY	Faculty (1:Science; 0:Art)	0.190	0.393
DCLASS2	Class of respondents (1:second; 0:other)	0.458	0.499
DCLASS3	Class of respondents (1:third; 0:other)	0.308	0.462
DCLASS4	Class of respondents (1:fourth; 0:other)	0.235	0.425
SCHOOLTYPE	Type of high school (1:public; 0:private)	0.053	0.223
TVHOURS	Watching TV (1:equal and less than 2 hours; 0:other)	0.290	0.454
INTHOURS	Use on the internet (1:equal and less than 2 hours; 0:other)	0.330	0.471
STUHOURS	Studying (1:equal and less than 1 hours; 0:other)	0.660	0.474
HSIZE	Size of Household	7.213	2.672
INCOME	Monthly income	865417.500	594320.714
REFERENCE	Use your teachers' suggested (1: Yes; 2: No)	1.313	0.464
DROOM	Own study room at home (1: Yes; 2: No)	1.408	0.492
WORK	Currently have a job (1: Yes; 2: No)	1.768	0.423

Table 2 presents the regression results for the effect of factor on academic performance of students. According to the correlation

analysis, there is no multicollinearity between independent variables. In order to see whether the model error terms have a normal distribution or not, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is used and null hypothesis (H0: Error terms are normally distributed) this hypothesis could not be rejected at significance level of 0.05. According to these results, this regression model satisfies the classical regression model assumptions.

The coefficient of determination, R^2 which is not only indicates the goodness of fit, but can also be interpreted as the amount of variation of the dependent variable wasexplained by the regression equation. The value of R2 shows that 32% of the variation in the dependent variable was explained by independent variables.For a model estimated with cross-section data, these low R2 values are not unusual because of the large degree of stochastic variation in survey data.The F value of the regression model is 8.30 and the level of significance of the data is p-value 0.000, which is smaller than 0.05, meaning that regression models can be used to predict the dependent variable.In the model, 11 estimated parameters out of 23 are statistically significant at 10 percent significance level or less.

The first variable represents the constant. This is the predicted value of degree when all other variables are 0. This estimated value of 86.6 is found to be statistically significant.

Age has played a big part as regards to education, like entry age of students to a school, and therefore age would be a predictor of success*[29]*.According to the results, for every unit increase in AGE, we expect a 0.455 unit decrease in the student score, holding all other variables constant. The coefficient for AGE is significantly different from 0 because its p-value (0.016) is smaller than 0.05 levels. According to these results students that have small age is better than the ones with big age to get the good score. This result is considerably differentwith *[12]*detected that there is no relationship between matured age credits and academic presentation of undergraduate students.

There have been many poor parents unable to meet the costs and who have opted to not enroll their children. Increase of the level of poverty makes parents unable to feed their children properly and provide education. Children whose parents cannot afford the cost of instructional materials, school uniforms, activity fees and tuition fees, tend to go to school irregularly and in the long run, drop out of school *[30]*. According to estimated results for working status of father (WORKF), for students whose father is employed, the predicted score of students would be 0.2 points lower than for student's unemployed father. This results show that students whose father is unemployed get a good score. But this result is not statistically significant. The result of this research is similar with that of*[13]*, whosaid they argued that socio-economic status of parents has a great impact on the students' performance. Moreover and [15] showed students from better social economic backgrounds will perform better than other students who have less financial opportunities.

School attendance is an important factor in student academic performance *([14], [31] -[32])*.The coefficient for ATTENDANCE is found to be 0.471. This result shows that students staying in class more get a good score, holding all other variables constant. This result is same with *[14]* and *[32]* whofound that attendance had a positive and significant effect on academic performance. *Reference[31]*also found that poor attendance has been related to poor academic achievement.

Schools are social institutions in which groups of individuals are brought together to contribute to educational experiences and such interplay may breed on learners positive or negative influences*[9]*.

According to the results of the estimated parameters of SCOREHS2, SCOREHS3, SCOREHS4 and SCOREHS5, increasing high school score effects student academic performancepositively. Moreover, students having a good score in high school get a good score in college too. This study is same with *[33]* founded that there is positive correlation between high school and academic performance.

*Reference[34]*and*[35]* revealed a significant difference between academic performance of students from parents with high educational background and students from parents with low educational background. According to the results of this study, education level of mother has positive and statistically relatedrelation with academic performance of students. This result shows that student's mother having good level of education getsalso a good score. The study is consistent with the study of*[35]* that reported that there is a significant impact of mother's education on the academic performance.

Diversity of faculty students enrolled is also an important factor in students' academic achievement. The coefficient for DFACULTY (9.246) is significantly different from 0 because its p-value is smaller than 0.05.Then, these results show that students in the science faculty get score more than the ones in the art faculty. Estimated coefficients for DCLASS3 (-2.703) and DCLASS4 (-1.860) are statistically significant, and indicated that third and fourth grade students get lower score than second grade students.

Internet and watching TV indeed have been part of a student's life in today's generation. *Reference[17]*stated that the addict of internet is someone who couldn't control his or her use of internet, which finally causes some problems inschool, and/or work difficulties in a person's life.Then watching TV and use of internet are negatively related to academic performance of students. Then, these results show that students spending more time on TV and internet getlower score.*Reference[36]*indicated that low TV viewer adolescents show a higher scholastic achievement than the heavy TV viewer group of adolescents.

The best way to get good score is to study as a normal part of their daily lives to know, high score requires effort and perseverance. According to our study, students spend more time to study get good score. However, the coefficient for STUHOURS (1.009) is not significantly different from 0 because its p-value is 0.182, which is more than 0.05. These results are consistent with the study conducted by*[37]*mentioned that the stronger focus on academic study time is as the central key to positive academic results.

The large family sizes will not be settled the mind of the students in order to give room for creativity. For every unit increase in HSIZE, we expect a 0.323 unit decrease in the student score, holding all other variables constant. The coefficient for HSIZE (-0.323) is significantly different from 0 because its p-value is 0.019, which is smaller than 0.05. These results show that students who have small size of household get good score. We can say the result of this study is agreedwith study of*[38]* thatfound that family size has significant influence on students' performance.

Generally, studentsworking don't have enough time to study and get a good score. According to the results, there is a negative and statistically significant relationship between the employment status of students and academic performance of students. Then these results show that students having a job do not get good score.This study is not agreed with the study of *[39]*. They did not find any strong evidence that hour of work during the academic year in the range that students worked significantly reduced grade point averages.

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Table 2 : Regression analyses of effect factors variable

Variables	*Coefficients*	*Std. Error*	*t-values*	*P-values*
(Constant)	86.804***	5.341	16.252	0.000
AGE	-0.455**	0.187	-2.428	0.016
WORKF	-0.297	0.697	-0.426	0.671
ATTENDANCE	0.471	1.050	0.449	0.654
SCOREHS3	0.291	0.871	0.334	0.738
SCOREHS4	2.021*	1.054	1.917	0.056
SCOREHS5	6.409***	1.787	3.586	0.000
EDUMOTHER3	0.075	0.737	0.102	0.919
EDUMOTHER4	2.802*	1.697	1.651	0.100
GENDER	-0.170	0.758	-0.224	0.823
MARITAL	-0.721	1.216	-0.593	0.554
DFACULTY	9.246***	0.936	9.879	0.000
DCLASS3	-2.703***	0.811	-3.334	0.001
DCLASS4	-1.860**	0.921	-2.019	0.044
SCHOOLTYPE	1.158	1.668	0.694	0.488
TVHOURS	-0.331	0.766	-0.432	0.666
INTHOURS	-0.334	0.771	-0.434	0.665
STUHOURS	1.009	0.754	1.338	0.182
HSIZE	-0.323**	0.137	-2.358	0.019
INCOME	0.000	0.000	0.850	0.396
REFERENCE	0.837	0.752	1.114	0.266
DROOM	1.185*	0.710	1.669	0.098
WORK	-1.689*	0.887	-1.904	0.058
R^2 : 0,3226 F-test : 8,30 P value : 0,000				

IV. Conclusion

Study includes restrictions related to geographic location and sample size, and the questionnaires that were used. Although the sample size (N = 400) was specified to be sufficient to reveal a medium impact *[40]*, the questionnaires that were utilized in this study reported trust and credibility measures that were enough.

Students that have small age is better than the ones with big age to get the good score, and students whose father is employed, students staying in class more andstudents having a good score in high school get a good score in college too, as well as student's mother having good level of education, student in the good faculty, students spend them more time to study and students that have small size of household get good score. On the other hand,student in the upper class and students spendingmuch time to TV and on internet do not get good score, and in addition, students that have a job do not get good score.

The results suggested there is negative and weak correlation with education level of fathers, father work, watching TV and use of internet based on the data, and not significant relation with family income for the sample. On the other hand, peer impacts are significantly measured in this study. Score of students is positive and strongly related with the faculty and score of high school. The most important thing we can talk about is that education level of mother is also positively correlated with the students' academic performance. Score of students is negative and strongly related to age of students, class, and size of household and employment status of students.

V. Recommendation

- Former school background is mission in the set academic performance; therefore the university should maintain data of where their pupils come from and should try to establisha link with the schools from where more disciplined and talented pupils come from, so that more pupils are accepted from these schools.
- Students should be directed towardsthe possible factors (both socio-economic and demographic) that may hinder their success in academic pursuit.
- The financing aid to students in financial need, especially at the tertiary education level.
- University institutions should promote family planning education to include the impact of marriage on the academic future of children.
- Because this study was conductedonly for Soran University inthe Northern Iraq, its results may or may not be externally valid. In order for this result to become valid for the whole country, so it is recommended that this study be conducted at a wide level of theNorthern Iraq.

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