

Factors Affecting The Academic Performance And Role Of Counselling In Improving Grades In Physiology.

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I. Introduction:

One of the prime emerging issues in the development of medical students is the exposure and adjustment difficulties to the new environment. These difficulties primarily include anxiety, academic burden, learning styles, homesickness, time management issues and individual factors like overuse of social media, personal IQ, family background, parental and peer pressures.¹

In order to resolve these adjustment issues, we established a counselling system to identify various factors affecting the academic performance of students and to improve their performance in physiology by addressing those factors on individual basis.

The pivotal aim of undergraduate medical education is to generate competent doctors. This aim can only be achieved if students are brought up in teacher -student friendly atmosphere. Good interpersonal relationships need to be developed and this enable students to develop self understanding and to make positive changes in their lives for fruitful outcome.²

The main objectives of our study were:

- To identify factors contributing to negative academic performance of students in physiology.
- To find the relationship between counselling and improvement of academic performance.

II. Material And Methods

This cross sectional study was conducted in the Department of Physiology, SKIMS Medical College, Bemina, Srinagar, J&K, among 100 first year MBBS students during the academic year 2017-18. Ethical clearance was taken from the institutional ethics committee before starting the study. One hundred students from first year MBBS were enrolled in the study. A pre-validated questionnaire was prepared, taking into consideration various factors associated with academic performance of students which included:

- Individual factors like interest/problems related to language/ understanding the subject.
- Environmental factors/ social media.
- Factors pertaining to family.
- Teacher related factors.

Students were provided questionnaire after obtaining their informed consent. Discussions among students was not allowed.

Two class tests were conducted. First test was conducted without any discussion with the students about their performance and students were divided into categories on the basis of their grades in the test.

- Grade A > 50% score
- Grade B 40 – 49% score
- Grade C < 40% score

Students falling in Grade C were taken into consideration for counselling sessions. Two to three face to face counselling sessions of faculty were done with them and individual factors related to their performance were discussed. Then, post counselling test, was conducted to assess the impact of counselling on their grades.

Results were expressed in terms of percentage(%). Mean of scores was calculated and the mean were compared by student's t-test using SPSS version 21 for MAC (IBM Inc. CA). P value of < 0.05 was taken as significant.

III. Results:

Total number of students that participated in the study were one hundred (n=100). We had an equal proportion of male and female students (M:F :: 50:50).

Among the various factors affecting the academic performance of the students adversely, time management issue was the most predominant factor (91%). Eighty five percent of the students had reported overuse of social media like facebook as the main source of distraction while difficulty in adjusting to the new environment was reported to the tune of 75%. (Chart 1)

Subject and teaching related issues were not much of a concern among the students as 92% of the students could understand the subject with routine teaching methods. Ninety five percent respondents were satisfied with their teachers in terms of their guidance and approachability. (Chart 2).

Very few students (2%) quoted that family problems like home sickness had a negative impact on their academic performance.

Total number of students falling in Grade C group were twenty five (25%). Positive impact of counselling was seen on 88% of the students (23/25), in terms of improvement of their grades in post counselling tests. Increment of 15% to 30% in average marks scored by students after counselling sessions was noted in 60 percent of the students while 28% of the students were able to improve their marks by 10-15%. However only 12 % of the students failed to show any improvement after counselling. Mean score of Grade C students was 21.63+ 4.93% which increased to 44.23+2.25%, after counselling sessions. (Chart 3).

IV. Discussion:

Poor academic performance of medical students is multifactorial. These factors include academic burden, personality, IQ, lack of interest in field, overuse of social media and above all difficulty in adjusting to new environment and time management issues.^{3,4}

Our study revealed that factors perceived by students causing low academic performance were mainly individual rather than environmental or related to teaching and family issues. Among the individual issues, time management issue (91%) and overuse of social media (85%) outscored the other factors.

Difficulty in adjusting to new environment also played a significant role in negative outcome of performance (75%).

Only a small proportion of students related their poor academic performance to teaching related factors like lengthy lectures (12%), lack of guidance (5%), difficulty in understanding language (15%).

Research has indicated negative influence of social media on students. Study by Haq and Chand⁵ on 384 students concluded that facebook use has an adverse influence on student's academic performance. It's imperative to realise that time spent on social activities will be on the account of academic performance. Paul et al⁶ (2012) concluded to a negative relationship between social media use and their academic performance.

Secondly, we noticed that difficulty in adjusting to new environment played a vital role in affecting the performance of students adversely. These adjustment problems included

- Fear of failure/ lack of confidence.
- Poor english ability.
- Unavailability of healthy food.
- Home sickness.
- Vast syllabus and increased work load leading to anxiety.

Time management is quite essential to any university student and it is one of the keys to higher academic achievements.⁷ Only significant small proportion has a high level time management skills.⁸

In our study, we noticed major deterrence in academic performance was due to time management issues (91%) like inability to give good amount of time to the subject, not reading the subject on regular basis, lacking good quality planning behaviour.

Our study also explored the impact of counselling on the academic progress and retention by using objective measures. Counselling sessions included face to face individual intake interviews with college faculty members, understanding the personal problems and academic difficulties of students in their studies. Subsequently, they received constructive support from the counsellors. It was found that 88% (22 out of 25) students had positive impact of counselling on their academic performance and self- confidence. Counselling sessions in colleges has been effective in easing out student's personal difficulties and has positive impact on academic performance.^{2,9,10}

V. Conclusion:

A positive academic performance of a student is based on multiple factors, which need to be addressed by teachers. In this regard an honest and dedicated approach of teachers is imperative. Most of these factors are correctable and counselling on individual basis goes a long way in overall improvement of academic outcome

of students. Hence, we recommend a dedicated and responsible attitude of teachers in understanding the genesis of poor performance of students and there by dealing with them with proper counselling in order to have a more competent and responsible prodigy of medical students.

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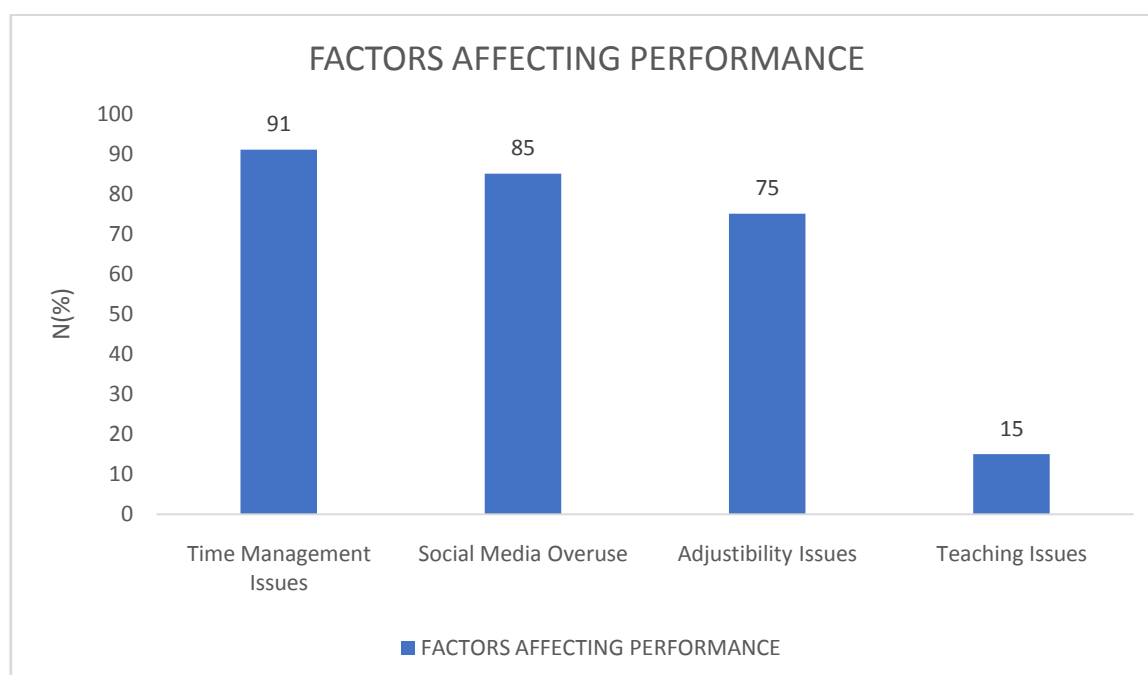


Chart 1.

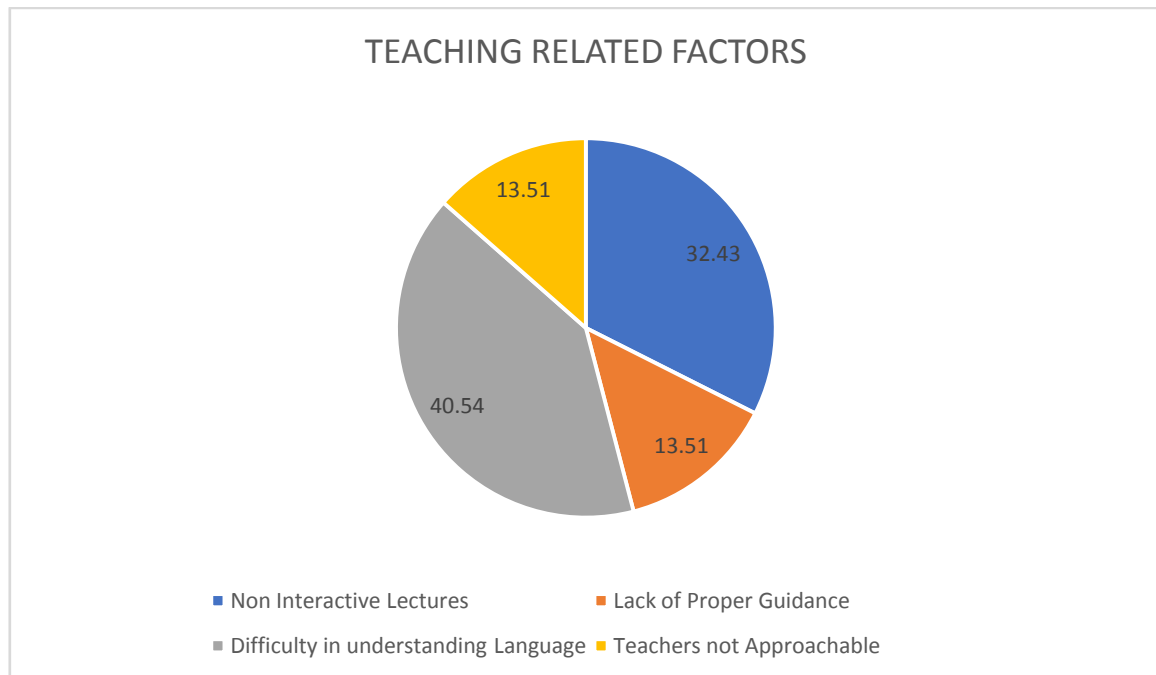


Chart 2.

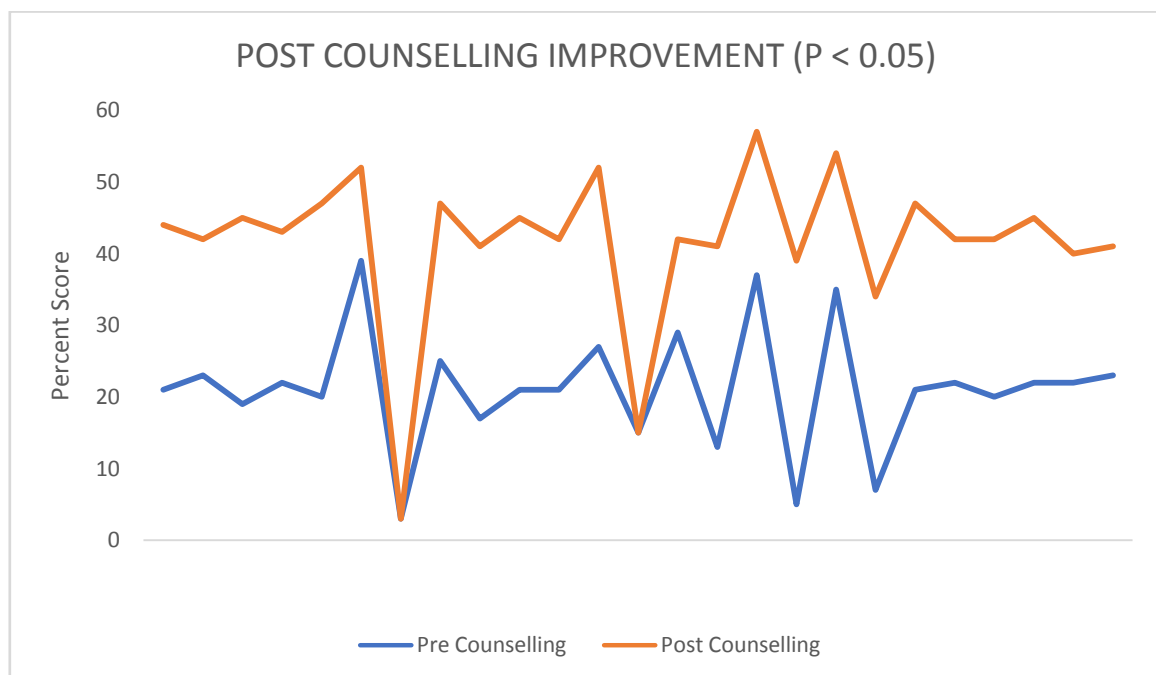


Chart 3.

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