Original Article

Learning Experience of Undergraduates

Exploring the Perception of Undergraduate Medical Students about Utilization of Time in Self-Study Hours in Islamic International Medical College (IIMC)

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To explore the perception of students about utilization of self-study time. To explore the factors influencing the student's attitude towards utilization of self-study hours.

Study Design: An observational / descriptive / cross-sectional study

Place and Duration of Study: This study was conducted at the Islamic International Medical College (IIMC) from June 2019 to December 2019.

Materials and Methods: 20 statement Structured questionnaire containing 12 questions related to perception of students about utilization self-study and 4 questions on factors like self-study resources, time and place given to it. Data was analyzed by SPSS 21 version.

Results: Two hundred and seventy students participated in the survey (Response Rate = 76%). Mean value for perception of students about utilization of self-study hour was 3.10 (SD=1.32) and the mean of factors affecting this perception was 2.66 (SD=1.30). 58% of students said that self-study enhanced their learning abilities and it should be placed before small group discussions (72%). Factors affecting the utilization of self-study hours are resources, venues, placement of self-study hours in time table, total time given per module and guidance are the important factors.

Conclusion: Students perceive self-study as useful component for learning but most of them are not utilizing it in study purposes due to lack of resources. Analysis of results find that the effect of self-study on academic success depends on providing calm and resourceful venues with better distribution of hours in schedule with some motivation and supervision.

Key Words: Self-study, utilization, undergraduate medical students

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INTRODUCTION

Technology and globalization are rapidly expanding the economic field of play. It is transforming the way we live and the way we work. Students must know how to learn on daily basis, to adapt to a rapidly shifting era, and to take independent initiative when opportunities are no longer there[1].

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Proper utilization of self-study time prepares students for this new world in which the active learner survives best[2].

Medical students need to improve their competencies and stay updated with developments in their field. The pedagogic shift from the traditional teacher centred approach to a student centred approach emphasizes on student's independency in their learning[3]. Medical colleges are making conscious efforts to produce learner centered educational activities in the undergraduate medical curriculum, aimed at improving knowledge and various dimensions of life-long learning[4]. Long term learning is possible when students can manage their learning by actively taking control of learning activities especially in self-study time[5]. So the learners are able to actively take initiative and responsible for their learning by understanding their needs, formulating goals, determining appropriate resources, strategies of learning, and evaluate learning outcome."[2]. Self-study is to plan and organize learning activities, set goals, monitor their progress, reflect

upon, and then evaluate learning process[6]. It shows high level of efforts, to reach the goals that has been set[7].

Self-study is a useful tool to enhance the learning experience. It leads to opportunities required to innovate learning experience both academically and professionally[8]. Students take an active role in setting goals, deciding how to achieve them and planning self-study[9]. Both self-study and the traditional classroom learning methodology complement each other and help students to learn and retain the information better. Students who are wisely using self-study hours are active learners and have strong capacity to engage in independent learning[10,11].

The institution of the present study has adopted integrated curriculum with 20% time allotted to self-study in time table. Problem based learning, lectures, small group discussions, case based learning and clinical skill labs are teaching methodologies used for undergraduate medical students. The objective of the present study was to explore opinions of medical students about the utilization of these self-study hours and factors that affect its usefulness.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Descriptive cross-sectional study design was used to know the opinion of pre-clinical and clinical undergraduate medical students. Study was conducted at Islamic International Medical College (IIMC) which applied the integrated system-based curriculum seven years ago and self -study was included in each module that is 20% of total hours. Convenient sampling technique was used with a sample size of 270 students from first year to final year MBBS. Data was collected from august to October 2018.

Self-structured Questionnaire was used to collect the data after reviewing the literature of self-directed learning. The participants reflected their opinions of 20 questionnaire items, on a 5-point Likert scale (where 5 strongly agree, 4 agree, 3 uncertain, 2 disagree, and 1 strongly disagree). The questionnaire consisted of three parts (1) Information on students' gender, age, class, and academic achievement (GPA) (2) questions on utilization of self-study including three negative and rest positive (3) open ended questions about the commonest activity students do during self-study hours, factors stopping them from self-study and their opinion for improvement of self-study utilization.

Ethical approval for this study was received from the ethical committee of Riphah International University. Students were informed about the study and had the choice to participate following the rules of informed consent.

The pilot study of the questionnaire was applied to 20 medical students and favorable results were obtained and the reliability coefficient was calculated (Cronbach alpha: 0.8). The questionnaire was distributed from first to final year students and collected 15 minutes later. The purpose of the study was briefly explained to the students and written informed consents were obtained. Ethical approval of the study was obtained from the Ethical review committee of Riphah International University.

SPSS 21.0 for Windows was used to analyze the collected data. Frequency analysis of the responses was performed, and agreement to each item was done by adding the frequencies of strongly agree and agree responses. Disagreement to each item was calculated by adding the frequencies of strongly disagree and disagree responses.

RESULTS

Total number of students participated in survey was 270 giving the response rate of 76%. Majority of the respondents were between 20-24 years of age with 21.4% from first and second year each, 23.2% from third year, 16% from fourth year and 17 % from final year. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of opinion of students was above 0.7 indicating good internal consistency.

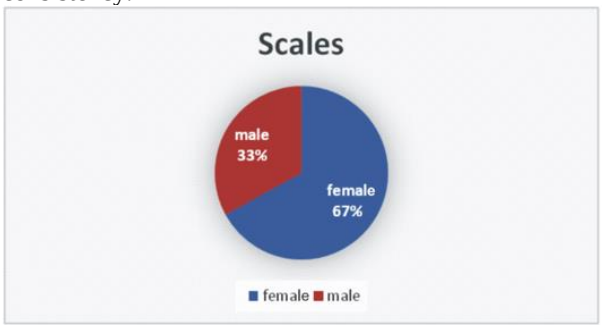

Figure No.1: Gender distribution of respondents

Mean value about utilization of self-study hours is 3.10 (SD=1.32). 63% of the students agreed that self -study is useful tool to enhance learning with 23% saying that there is no need of it during college time because of non-availability of proper place and resources. 63% students spend this time in relaxing and 25% are actually utilizing this time in studies of their relevant subjects.

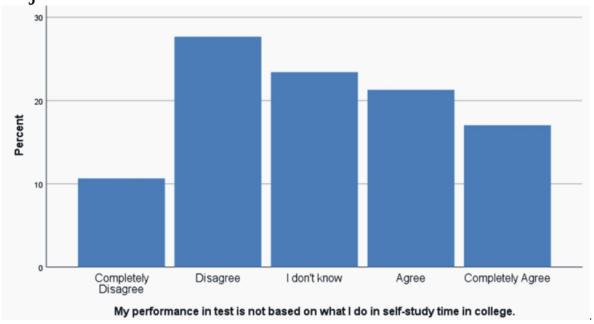

Figure No.2: Students response

Regarding the influence of subject in first- and second-year students 44% need more self-study hours for anatomy and 37% for pharmacology, third year need more hours for orthopedics (37%), forensic medicine

(15%) and pathology (25%) while 70% of fourth and final year students need self-study for medicine.

Table No.1: Factors affecting the utilization of self-study

Factors	Mean and standard deviation
Resources for self-study like computer, Wi-Fi. Books, past papers, scientific articles etc. are easily available in my college.	2.51±1.43
One hour for self-study is enough during college hours	2.70±1.36
Slot of self-study should be placed thoughtfully in time table.	3.75±1.26
We have enough venues for self-study in college	1.69±1.16
Total	2.66±1.30

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the opinion of undergraduate medical students on utilization of self-study hours. Comparing with other studies our findings are similar with few differences. Self-study hours were found beneficial for some students but not for all. Literature on this area of utilization of reserved slots for self-study during college time are not available; may be the reason for this could be that it is considered to be used in a different way at ones' own timing[10]. Reserving the specific slots in timetable was a strategy by the college. Specifically, we wanted to know that how our undergraduate students are using this time.

Both male and female students agreed the time allocated for self-study is sufficient. Students spend this time in non-academic activities due to lack of proper resources. This raised the concern for administration and department of medical education to look into this matter.

Factors affecting the utilization of self-study hours are identified by the students. Resources, venues, placement of self-study hours in time table, total time given per module and guidance are the important ones. Literature identified that effectiveness can be accomplished if the students are encouraged and motivated[12]. The identified factors must be considered and students are to be guided in such a way that they are always ready to explore their resources and utilize this time to learn. Setting a learning goal for specific slot would make it easier for students and the faculties identify the learning need[6].

Self-study can be a good method to make students learn but it needs to be opted in time table in such a way that it gives time to students before small group discussion. This will help the students to study about the upcoming topics. Student's performance in the test is also influenced by the self-study slot in time table. Most of the students preferred to relax during the allotted time of self-study. But there are those who utilize this time in studying the topic of upcoming class. Study environments that nurture and develop cognitive skills are important in the developm[13].Teachers should make sure that students are aware of skills required to utilize this time[14].

Our study identified from the student's opinion that subject selection for self-study hours is related to the difficulty level of subject. They need more time for subjects in accordance with the year of study. First- and second-year students need more self-study hours for anatomy and for pharmacology, third year need more hours for orthopedics (37%), forensic medicine (15%) and pathology (25%) while 70% of fourth and final year students need self-study for medicine. There self-study slots should be altered in such a way that they can accomplish their goals in respective subjects. The undergraduate medical students should be oriented on the relevance of active learning strategies in their future studies[12].

The present study is not without limitations. Follow up studies in similar setting from other colleges will add up to clear this picture. A qualitative study should be conducted to find the opinion of faculty about the inappropriate use of time allocated to self-study during college hours.

CONCLUSION

Students perceive self-study hours are useful for learning but most of them are not utilizing it in study purposes due to lack of resources. Self-study hours help students to learn if resources are provided. Analysis of results find that the effect of self-study on academic success depends on providing calm and resourceful venues with better distribution of hours in schedule with some motivation and supervision.

Recommendations: It was observed that student accepted the importance of self-study in their medical studies. But not properly avail the time due to lack of motivation and proper guidance. Which is overcome by:

A. to give complete orientation in the beginning of first year that is foundation module
B. to give layout of self-study total time period and its distribution in the start of every module
C. to provide proper setting place and other Wi-Fi devices
D. to place the self-study before SGD and FORMATIVE assessment

Author's Contribution:

Concept & Design of Study:	Tasneem Murad, Afsheen Zafar
Drafting:	Tasneem Murad, Noor ul Ain
Data Analysis:	Noor ul Ain

Revisiting Critically:	Sheeba Shabir
Final Approval of version:	Afsheen Zafar, Sheeba Shabir

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