

Study Habits and Academic Performance: Basis for the Optimization of Guidance and Counseling Programs

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Abstract. Like other student support services, guidance and counseling programs are significant in every educational system. A key aspect of these programs focuses on providing suitable academic support that enhances students' positive attitudes toward learning. The established significance of this key aspect resulted in the conduct of this quantitative research, initially gauging the study habits and academic performance of 634 pre-university students from various tracks, strands, and levels across private institutions in the Philippines. Through a validated and reliability-tested 50-item questionnaire, the researchers assessed the study habits of the participants. They analyzed the results using parametric (i.e., unpaired t-test) and nonparametric statistical tools (i.e., Kruskal-Wallis H test, Spearman's rank correlation). The study disclosed that, generally, the participants often take part in their study habits, which created a positive weak correlation with their academic performance. Furthermore, when the results were categorized according to their educational profiles, significant differences emerged in their track-strand and GPA-specific study habits. This suggests that their fields of study and academic standing impact the extent of their study habits, while their grade level does not. In conclusion, the findings emphasize the importance of developing self-awareness among students and optimizing academic support within guidance and counseling programs to address students' academic demands and contextual needs.

Keywords: Tracks; Strands; Correlation; GPA; Academic support.

1.0 Introduction

With the mandate of Republic Act 10533, or the K to 12 Education Act of 2013, the Philippine education system faced a significant change. After 10 years of basic education, Filipino learners are now required to complete a 12-year cycle. This educational shift necessitates a year of kindergarten education, six years of primary and intermediate schooling, four years of junior high school, and an additional two years of senior high school. The Department of Education (DepEd), through its DepEd Order 76, series of 2016, highlighted that the two years of senior high school intend to have graduates in basic education who are "holistically developed, equipped with 21st century skills (i.e., learning and innovation skills, life and career skills, communication skills, and information media and technology skills), and prepared for the future" (p. 2). These graduate attributes were expected among students upon finishing their last year at any accredited senior high school in the country.

Since its initial implementation in 2016, senior high school students have been allowed to select from one of the four tracks, taking into account their interests and current abilities (Abrigo & Orbeta, 2023). Students can choose

either the Academic, Arts and Design (AD), Sports, or Technical, Vocational, and Livelihood (TVL) Track. More so, some of these tracks have specific strands that they can specialize in. Indeed, it has become clear that the two additional years in basic education aspire to transform Filipino learners into competitive individuals who can deliver even in the global context (Guiamalon & Hariraya, 2021). However, not to disregard its notable contributions, the country's senior high school program similarly possesses major flaws (Gurobat & Lumbu-an, 2022). According to the policy notes released by the Second Congressional Commission on Education, a number of issues could have prevented the senior high school program from flourishing (Abrigo & Orbeta, 2023). Although these issues were not explicitly discussed, the experiences of administrators, teachers, and students can attest to the many challenges that the program confronts almost a decade after its first year of implementation.

To zero in on the challenges of Filipino senior high school students, the work of Dofeliz (2021) identified various social, financial, emotional, and physical struggles that this particular population of students goes through. Apart from these, there are also personal challenges related to their study habits and academic performance. For this present article's operational definition, study habits pertain to the established or routine practices of students as regards their learning process. Conversely, their academic performance refers to their scholastic standing in class, as measured by DepEd's grading system.

Study habits are an influential factor affecting students' academic performance. Jafari et al. (2019) agreed, stating that one of the important determinants of students' academic performance is their study habits. Hence, effective study habits are believed to lead to better performance in school (Numan & Hasan, 2017), while bad study habits can have a significant negative impact on students' academic performance (Fouché, 2017). Therefore, improving the academic performance of students includes the development of good study habits.

Magulod (2019) mentioned that in school settings, academic performance is the primary indicator of a quality learning experience. Taking this into consideration, academic institutions should ensure that all factors influencing one's academic performance are closely monitored to help students achieve a quality learning experience. These, among other possible factors, include their learning routines or academic practices, which are also known as study habits. Sharma and Vyas (2017) defined this term as various techniques and ways that students utilize in studying to keep themselves afloat in academics. Depending on the framework, model, or tool used, study habits encompass varying domains or areas.

To cite an example, Gahir et al. (2022) utilized the study habits inventory of Palsane and Sharma. This inventory entails items related to examinations, time management, reading, memorization, physical environment, and learning motivation or strategies. Pandey and Singh (2015) administered the same tool to determine the academic behavior or study habits of students from India. In Spain, Ortega-Ruipérez (2022) used the adapted questionnaire of Hernández and Camargo from Cleary's Self-Regulation Strategies Inventory. The said inventory consists of 18 items about regulation, environment, information, and task organization. In the Philippine context, Salva (2020) validated and tested for reliability a questionnaire that focuses on five different domains of study habits. The questionnaire was contextualized from the questionnaire that Lucas and Corpuz (2014) adapted from Bradford University. It has five domains that tap the concepts of goal setting, metacognitive awareness, academic requirements, test-taking and preparation, and time and stress management. Overall, the said questionnaire, which this current study also utilized, has 50 items, with 10 items for each domain of study habits.

Four years ago, Lopez (2021) developed a localized study habits inventory for high school students utilizing an exploratory sequential mixed methods research design. Meanwhile, Tus (2020) studied the relationship between Filipino senior high school students' study attitudes and habits and their academic performance. The researcher reported that both study attitudes and study habits were determinants of students' academic performance. In addition, Castillo et al. (2023) investigated whether the academic performance of senior high school students was significantly affected by their post-pandemic study habits in a blended learning environment. Specifically, the latter researchers found a strong positive relationship between study habits and academic performance. In the most recent study conducted by Salva et al. (2022), the study habits of secondary students were tested for differences concerning the participants' sex, socioeconomic status, and education level. The researchers reported that female secondary students have significantly better study habits than male secondary students. When it comes to socioeconomic status, it was found that affluent students had significantly better study habits than students of low socioeconomic status. It was also disclosed that, when it comes to education level, junior high school students have better study habits than senior high school students. Despite the findings of these articles

and the increase in research about the study habits of Filipino students, researchers still recommend further investigation on a similar topic with a different scope. Salva et al. encouraged future researchers to delve into correlation studies on study habits, and Magulod (2019) suggested increasing the sample size and considering the ethnicity of the target participants.

Previously, there were Philippine-based research undertakings on study habits focused on college students (Lacida & Murcia, 2015; Magulod, 2019; Villa & Sebastian, 2021) and junior high school students (Capuno et al., 2019; Digal & Walag, 2019; Pascual, 2022). Upon scrutiny of the participants' profiles in these studies, most of them were enrolled in public schools, universities, or colleges. On the other hand, there were earlier studies conducted wherein the participants were senior high school students in private schools (Castillo et al., 2023; Tus, 2020), but these studies were done either in rural areas or in a specific geographical location in the country. Considering these, it is interesting to explore the study habits of senior high school students in urban private schools, not limited to one geographical location. Islam (2021) conducted a study in Bangladesh that discussed the contextual differences in school types: public and private. Although there was no significant difference found in the study habits of Bangladeshi students in public and private schools, the Philippine context may offer differing results. Moreover, the current researchers perceive the importance of involving students from senior high school since they are in the crucial years for choosing a program before entering college (Castillo et al., 2023). In addition, Siah and Maiyo (2015) mentioned that the influence of study habits not only affects students during their schooling but also in their future careers.

Study habits and academic performance, as per Unwalla (2020) and Tus (2020), respectively, are believed to play crucial roles in the educational success of every student. In other scholarly works, the relationship between these variables is repeatedly cited, claiming that students' study habits can sway their academic performance. For instance, Rabia et al. (2017) and Sakirudeen and Sanni (2017) found that a strong correlation exists between the two. Castillo et al. (2023), in their Philippine-based study, likewise agreed to this in their quantitative research that utilized a descriptive-correlational design. These published studies can already serve as evidence of the relationship between study habits and academic performance. However, these scholarly papers do not address the empirical and population gaps that this study aims to address. Rabia et al. and Sakirudeen and Sanni are both foreign studies, while the study of Castillo et al., although conducted in the Philippine setting, was done within the context of blended learning.

Approximately 4,830 private schools are offering a senior high school program in the Philippines (DepEd, 2018). Given this data, the present researchers aimed to confirm the correlation between study habits and the academic performance of private Grades 11 and 12 students during face-to-face classes. Precedingly, the study habits of the senior high school students were gauged using a study habits questionnaire. At the same time, their academic performance was measured using their latest grade point average (GPA) for one semester during School Year (SY) 2023–2024. The findings disclosed in this study are deemed pivotal in the optimization or refinement of guidance and counseling programs in private senior high schools.

In the last few years, either or both study habits and academic performance have been considered and recommended to be included in the action plans of schools, particularly guidance counselors, to target students' educational needs and strengths (Abisola & Davies, 2019; Magulod Jr., 2019; Saani et al., 2022; Sakirudeen & Sanni, 2017). In Republic Act 9258, or the Guidance and Counseling Act of 2004, Filipino guidance counselors are recognized as professionals who assist individuals to develop and utilize their potential to the fullest. In the school setting, Kochhar in Singh et al. (2016) considered guidance and counseling necessary in helping students who may have difficulties regarding their academic achievement, faulty study habits, inefficient learning methods, and low motivation. In addition, Kyauta et al. (2017) reported that the availability of guidance and counseling services promotes study habits, which in turn leads to improvements in academic performance. Furthermore, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2019) published the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards and Competencies, which highlight the role of guidance counselors in supporting students in their academic journey. Guidance counselors in the Philippines, especially those at the secondary level, are recognized in the conduct of career guidance programs through DepEd Memorandum 242, series of 2007. Since it was stated that there is a significant impact that study habits have on academic performance (Lopez, 2021) and that their influence may hold up to the career actualization of students (Siah & Maiyo, 2015), guidance counselors should strongly consider the enhancement of students' study habits in refining their academic support programs.

Having said all these, the researchers purposely sought answers to the following research questions as a basis for guidance counselors in optimizing or refining their academic support programs: (1) What is the level of study habits among private senior high school students? (2) Do the study habits of respondents differ significantly when grouped according to their educational profile, namely grade level, track-strand, and GPA? Lastly, (3) Is there a correlation between the respondents' study habits and academic performance?

2.0 Methodology

This research employed a quantitative design to assess the study habits of Filipino senior high school students and thereafter determine the correlation between this variable and the students' academic performance. Overall, 1,183 senior high school students voluntarily participated, whereas 634 were enrolled in private institutions. In terms of grade levels, 327 307 Grade 11 and Grade 12 students, respectively, served as respondents of the study. These students have taken one of the four tracks usually offered in Philippine school settings, namely Academic, AD, Sports, and TVL. Under the first and last tracks are different strands based on the interest or preference of the students, according to DepEd Order 51, s. In 2015, the Academic Track had four strands: General Academic (GA), Accountancy, Business, and Management (ABM), Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS), and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). Likewise, TVL has the same number of strands, including Home Economics (HE), Industrial Arts (IA), Agri-Fishery Arts (AFA), and Information and Communications Technology (ICT). For a more detailed presentation, Table 1 visually articulates the total number of respondents per track and strand.

Table 1. *Profile of the Respondents according to Grade Levels, Tracks, and Strands*

Grade Levels	Academic				AD	Sports	TVL				Total
	ABM	STEM	HUMSS	GA			AFA	HE	ICT	IA	
Grade 11	68	152	50	8	2	8	39	327	68	152	50
Grade 12	63	153	60	6	1	14	10	307	63	153	60
Total	131	305	110	14	3	22	49	634	131	305	110

Note: No respondents from the GA, AFA, and IA strands under the Academic and TVL Tracks participated in the study, as these strands are offered in only a limited number of schools.

For the research instrument, the researchers utilized the expert-validated study habits questionnaire of Salva (2020). This instrument consists of 10 items for each of these five domains: (1) setting measurable goals; (2) developing metacognitive awareness; (3) working on academic requirements; (4) preparing for and taking the test; and (5) managing time and school-related stressors. To ensure the consistency of these domains, a pilot test was held with a sample of respondents. Reliability analysis was then conducted through Cronbach's alpha test, and the instrument was proven highly consistent with a coefficient alpha score of 0.92.

Prior to the actual data collection, the questionnaire was translated into both English and Filipino to guarantee its suitability for the most commonly spoken language of the respondents. Following that, personal communications were sent to school administrators, guidance counselors, senior high school teachers, and students. The data collection concluded after exhausting all the possible mechanisms to distribute the questionnaire, including open online and face-to-face calls.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to the collected data. Frequency, mean, and mean ranks were determined to assess the respondents' extent of study habits. For the choice of statistical tests, the normality of the data for each grouping variable was taken into consideration. For example, the means of the respondents were initially computed and then analyzed using the unpaired t-test to check whether significant differences existed in their study habits when clustered based on their grade level.

Alternatively, the mean ranks were used since the study habits of the respondents, when grouped according to their track-strand and GPA, did not meet the assumption of normality. This resulted in running the Kruskal-Wallis H test for the said datasets, which is a nonparametric equivalent of ANOVA that uses mean ranks instead of actual mean scores. To note, the respondents were requested to provide their most recent GPA in percentage. All these grades were categorized based on the descriptors and grading scale presented in DepEd Order 8, s. 2015 (i.e., Outstanding 90–100, Very Satisfactory 85–89, Satisfactory 80–84, Fairly Satisfactory 75–79, and Did Not Meet Expectations Below 75).

Finally, Spearman's rank correlation, another nonparametric tool, was employed in analyzing the correlation between the respondents' academic performance and study habits. This test first converts values into ranks instead

of using the raw GPAs and study habit mean scores. The conversion to ranks was done to examine the relationship between two variables, providing a basis for the refinement of academic support programs for private senior high school students.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Level of Study Habits among Private Senior High School Students

In examining the level of study habits among private senior high school students, descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze the data gathered from the participants. To make sense of the scores resulting from the data analysis, these verbal interpretations (VI) were assigned to each range of the Likert scale: Never (1.00–1.80); Seldom (1.81–2.60); Sometimes (2.61–3.40); Often (3.41–4.20); and Always (4.21–5.00).

Table 2. *Study Habits of Private Senior High School Students*

Domains of Study Habits	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Setting measurable goals	3.98	Often
2. Developing metacognitive awareness	4.05	Often
3. Working on academic requirements	4.21	Always
4. Preparing for and taking the test	4.12	Often
5. Managing time and school-related stressors	3.98	Often
Overall	4.07	Often

The total mean score of 4.07 indicates that senior high school students studying in private schools often engage in the five domains of study habits. Looking closely into the individual scores of central tendency in Table 2, working on academic requirements got the highest mean of 4.21, which could be interpreted as always. The remaining four domains of study habits, according to their ranks, are preparing for and taking the test (Mn=4.12), developing metacognitive awareness (Mn=4.05), managing time and school-related stressors (Mn=3.98), and setting measurable goals (Mn = 3.98), all of which received the verbal interpretation of often.

The results above resemble the findings of Salva et al. (2022), wherein junior and senior high school students in Philippine public schools rated working on their academic requirements as the highest. The consistency of these findings gives insight into the centrality of output production and performance-based activities in the K to 12 Education Act of 2013. Languing et al. (2023) encouraged a review of the required load of students, as it was found that problems are encountered when it comes to on-time compliance with teaching-learning activities. The authors emphasized that if it is not possible to reduce the load, then performance-based outcomes and cognitive learning should be considered because what is important is the quality of learning and not the quantity of requirements.

It is important to note that setting measurable goals and managing time and school-related stressors are the domains that received the lowest ratings. Guidance counselors may design academic support programs that aim to enrich these study habit domains. Garavalia and Gredler (in Chata et al., 2023) stated that higher academic achievement levels can be attributed to setting practical and rigorous goals. Saani et al. (2022) suggest helping students learn how to manage and utilize their time to plan out their study sessions. Additionally, Numan and Hassan (2017) discussed that practical time management skills, such as developing timetables and study plans, can translate to better academic performance. When students are better equipped with these skills, they can address stress better since, according to Gurobat and Lumbu-an (2022), pressures on students' emotional well-being and physical state can be attributed to their poor time management. These points provide insight into how students would benefit from school counselors emphasizing study habits in their guidance programs.

3.2 Comparison of Study Habits of Private Senior High School Students Based on Educational Profile

In terms of the findings in Tables 3 to 8, study habits of the participants have only shown significant differences when they are grouped according to their track-strand and GPA. The comparisons in Tables 5 and 7 specifically displayed p-values lower than .05. These imply that these particular educational profiles may influence how private senior high students perceive and practice their study habits.

In recent years, manuscripts, such as those of Barcenas and Bibon (2022) and Ramos (2017), have given considerable focus to the study habits of Filipino senior high school students from various tracks and strands. Although much attention was given to the relationship between their study habits and academic achievement, it was nevertheless concluded that there is a need to understand the determining variables that could affect their study habits. The result of the Kruskal-Wallis H test in Table 5 offers valuable insights into the complexities

influencing learners' study behaviors, revealing the significant difference in study routines between private senior high school students enrolled in the AD/Sports track and those in the Academic (HUMSS) strand. Given the substantial differences in the study habits of students from this track-strand, it becomes essential to examine the potential contextual and curricular factors when addressing students' study behaviors.

Table 3. *Group Descriptive Statistics according to Grade Level*

Grade Level	Mean	Standard Deviation	Std. Error of the Mean
Grade 11	4.077	0.229	0.032
Grade 12	4.063	0.190	0.027

Table 4. *Independent-Samples T-Test for Study Habits and Grade Level*

	Test Statistic	Degrees of Freedom	p-value
Study Habits and Grade Level	0.347	98	0.729

Table 5. *Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis H Test for Study Habits and Track-Strand*

	Test Statistic	Degrees of Freedom	p-value
Study Habits and Track-Strand	13.180	4	.010

Table 6. *Pairwise Comparisons of Study Habits according to Track-Strand*

GPA's Compared	Test Statistic	Standard Error	p-value
AD/Sports - Academic (ABM)	96.274	47.213	.414
AD/Sports - Academic (STEM)	123.554	45.640	.068
AD/Sports - TVL (HE/ICT)	-132.031	49.451	.076
AD/Sports - Academic (HUMSS)	151.553	47.728	.015
Academic (ABM) - Academic (STEM)	-27.280	19.131	1.000
Academic (ABM) - TVL (HE/ICT)	-35.757	26.990	1.000
Academic (ABM) - Academic (HUMSS)	-55.278	23.685	.196
Academic (STEM) - TVL (HE/ICT)	-8.477	24.133	1.000
Academic (STEM) - Academic (HUMSS)	27.998	20.369	1.000
TVL (HE/ICT) - Academic (HUMSS)	19.521	27.881	1.000

Table 7. *Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis H Test for Study Habits and GPA*

	Test Statistic	Degrees of Freedom	p-value
Study Habits and Grade Level	17.285	2	<.001

Table 8. *Pairwise Comparisons of Study Habits according to GPA*

GPA's Compared	Test Statistic	Standard Error	p-value
Satisfactory - Very Satisfactory	78.698	33.827	.060
Satisfactory - Outstanding	117.212	30.502	< .001
Very Satisfactory - Outstanding	38.514	18.830	.122

Moreover, the notable contrast in the GPA-specific study habits of private senior high schools further proves the findings of Magulod (2019) and Kyauta et al. (2017). Truly, students' approach to studying can vary depending on their academic performance. As Table 8 exhibits, participants with satisfactory and outstanding grades have marked differences regarding their routine learning practices. With study habits affecting students with varying academic standing (Abisola & Davies, 2019), it must be fathomed that study routines are certainly not the same for all students. Students with the highest GPAs might study differently compared to those with average or lower grades.

On the other hand, the slight difference in study habits scores between the participants' grade levels was not statistically significant, implying that being in a higher or lower grade level does not necessarily impact one's study behaviors. In an article, Languing et al. (2023) mentioned, "identifying the factors affecting their [referring to Grade 11 students] study habits would help improve them in the upcoming grade level" (p. 274). However, the recent findings present that grade level is not a significant factor influencing students' study habits. The insignificant difference found in this study is comparable to the published work of Digal and Walag (2019). While their research featured junior high school students, they similarly reported no significant difference in study habits across grade levels. This consistency reflects that a student's current grade level, whether they are in junior or senior high school, may not be a strong determinant of personal study behaviors.

3.3 Relationship between Private Senior High School Students' Study Habits and Academic Performance

Table 9. *Spearman's Correlation between GPA and Study Habits*

			GPA	Study Habits
Spearman's rho	GPA	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.144**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	634	634
	Study Habits	Correlation Coefficient	.144	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
		N	634	634

Note. **=Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Spearman's rho, a nonparametric measure of rank correlation, was used to examine the relationship between the participants' study habits and their academic performance. The result, as shown in Table 9, demonstrates a positive and statistically significant correlation between the variables, $r_s=0.144$. While this correlation is weak, it still lends support to the claim that better study habits among private senior high school students contribute to having higher GPAs.

The results of this study concur with the statements of Barcenas and Bibon (2022), Saani et al. (2022), and Islam (2021), which claimed that there is indeed a correlation between academic achievement and study habits. These authors concluded that better study habits are associated with higher academic achievement. Similarly, Siahi and Maiyo in Castillo et al. (2023) reported a significant positive relationship between study habits and academic performance. Guidance counselors, according to the School Counselors Professional Standards and Competencies published by ASCA (2019), play a role in their students' academic lives. Considering the results of this study, by designing academic support programs that enhance or enrich study habits, guidance counselors will be able to help their students' academic performance. Additionally, guidance programs focused on the enhancement and enrichment of study habits may also help students in their transition to tertiary education and their work lives. Castillo et al. (2023) explained that gaining awareness of one's study habits allows an individual to know what work style is effective and apply it to their learning process so that positive results are produced.

4.0 Conclusion

The results of the study provide valuable insight regarding private senior high school students' study habits and academic performance, which guidance counselors can use as a benchmark to optimize their programs for better support in students' academic lives. Guidance counselors can assist students in gaining awareness of their study habits and understanding how these habits relate to their academic performance. Students can also be helped in evaluating whether changes to their study habits are necessary for improved academic performance, as the results of the study suggest a significant difference in the study habits of students with the highest GPAs compared to those with average or lower grades. In addition to helping students gain awareness and understanding of study habits, guidance counselors can focus on enhancing senior high school students' goal-setting, as well as time and school-related stress management, as these areas ranked the lowest among the five domains of study habits. It is also crucial to note that guidance programs centered on study habits should be implemented with sensitivity to the context of students' tracks or strands, especially given the significant differences in the study habits of AD/Sports track and Academic (HUMSS) strand students. Lastly, since no significant difference was found between the study habits of Grade 11 and Grade 12 students, guidance counselors may implement programs on study habits that simultaneously cater to both grade levels, allowing students to learn from each other. Overall, guidance counselors are encouraged to optimize their guidance and counseling programs to assist senior high school students in developing their study habits to enhance their academic performance.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

Author 1: research conceptualization and design, data gathering and analysis, interpretation of results

Author 2: research conceptualization and design, data gathering and analysis, interpretation of results

6.0 Funding

This study did not receive external funding.

7.0 Conflict of Interests

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest related to this study.

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