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Dr. Dip Bahadur Adhikari
Associate Professor, Central
Department of Education, T
U, Kathmandu, Nepal

Dr. Maya Nath Ghimire
Trilok Academy, Kathmandu,
Nepal

Dasarath Neupane
Academic In-charge, Trilok
Academy, Machhapokhari,
Kathmandu, Nepal

Rajendra Lal Dhakal
HOD Mathematics, Trilok
Academy, Machhapokhari,
Kathmandu, Nepal

Correspondence

Dr. Dip Bahadur Adhikari
Associate Professor, Central
Department of Education, T
U, Kathmandu, Nepal

An exploratory research on academic performance of school students with reference to religion

Dr. Dip Bahadur Adhikari, Dr. Mayanath Ghimire, Dasarath Neupane and Ramesh Babu Regmi

Abstract

The research was conducted in Trilok Academic, Kathmandu, Nepal. The research is related academic performance of religion based students from Grade Nursery to Ten of Trilok Academy, Kathmandu, Nepal. The results showed that Hindu students have better performance than other religion students. Participation of Hindu students was 87.6%, Buddhist 9.6%, Christian 2.2% and Islamic 0.7% respectively.

Keywords: academic performance, students' secondary education, religion, literacy, achievement, behavior

1. Introduction

A review of the grading secured religion wise on the relationship between student religiosity and academic performance in Trilok Academic on Kathmandu, Nepal. The research based on the religion of the students in question: which religion of students secured which performance and rank identify among Hindus, Buddhist, Islamic and Christian. A description of studies reviewed under each perspective is described in the subsequent paragraphs.

Diane L. Moore (2010) ^[27] wrote three premises inform this project: illiteracy regarding religion these are: 1) Is widespread, 2) fuels bias and antipathy, and 3) can be reduced by education about religion in public schools using a non-devotional, academic perspective, called religious studies. There are important differences between this approach and a faith-based method to teaching and learning about religion. These Guidelines support the former, constitutionally sound approach for teaching about religion in community schools-encouraging student consciousness of religions, but not acknowledgment of a particular religion; studying about religion, but not practicing religion; exposing students to a diversity of religious views, but not imposing any particular view; and educating students about all religions, but not promoting or denigrating religion (Moore, 2010) ^[27].

A third premise of religious studies is the recognition that religions are collections of ideas, practices, values, and stories that are all embedded in cultures and not isolated from them. Just as religion cannot be understood in isolation from its cultural manifestations, it is impossible to understand culture without considering its religious dimensions. In the same way that race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality are always factors in cultural interpretation and understanding, so too is religion. Whether explicit or implicit, religious influences can virtually always be found when one asks "the religion question" of any given social/historical experience (Moore, 2010) ^[27].

Brian J. Grim wrote religion is an active force in the public, professional and personal lives of many in the United States. Safeguards for religious freedom – including the First Amendment principles of having no established religion and protecting free religious practice – have helped to produce a dynamic religious marketplace, including the ability of each person to have a religion, change religions, or have no religion at all (Grim & Grim, 2016) ^[11].

Nyoman Sueca wrote, Hindu Religion Education is a basic effort done by educators in order to prepare learners to understand, believe, live and practice the teachings of Hinduism, as practicing Pancasila in the life of nation and state. The purpose of teaching Hinduism focuses on the process of learning and the formation of religious beliefs against students to manifest in a good mental attitude and in the experience in society,

is expected to be a provision to students to achieve a broader knowledge and integrated goal of Hinduism “moksartham jagadhita ya ca iti dharma”. Achievement of learning of Hinduism, reflected in student learning outcomes that involve aspects of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. A student is said to be successful can be seen from the results of learning Hinduism owned from the behavior of his position with other students, and its relationship with teachers.

Oyuna Dorzhigushaeva wrote the academic reflection and formulation of the contemporary religious and cultural situation, search of its spiritual sources will help to reveal the general and specific regularities of the Buddhism as the system of ideas and theories and to track the stages of its revival in the former Soviet Union. Post-Perestroika and Post-Soviet revival of religious education in Russia is a significant historical event of deep spiritual meaning which demands academic interpretation by the contemporaries. The Russian Buddhist studies appeared not so long ago, a little over a century ago. During these years, scholars have finished to some extent the research of the main Buddhist treatises. It is a truly monumental work taking into account a huge number of philosophical treatises written within the 25 centuries of Buddhism history as the philosophical doctrine. Linnart Mäll, the known Buddhologist, has written an article “Dharma as Text and Text-Producing Mechanism” in “Bulletin of the University of Tartu” (Mäll, 1968) on this issue. In the Buddhist studies, the priorities were given to translation and analysis of philosophical treatises, while studying of Buddhist educational systems which actually allowed the Buddhism to become highly intellectual religion stayed in the background (Dorzhigushaeva, Dondukov, & Dondukova, 2017) [7].

Umaru Mustapha wrote from the Christian perspective, all but two of the studies studied were experiential in nature. These studies were founded on the statement that high levels of religiosity between Christian students would lead to high levels of academic performance. An important question to ask is, “What are the bases of this assumption?” Elms’ (Elms, 2007) [9] and Anthrop-Gonzalez *et al.*’s (Gonzalez & *et al.*, 2007) [9] qualitative studies provide the answer. Elms (Elms, 2007) [9] and Anthrop-Gonzalez *et al.* (Gonzalez & *et al.*, 2007) [10]. Asked ten high achieving American first-year university students and ten high achieving Latino high school students respectively to describe how their religiosity had impacted on their academic performances. Four themes emerged from the students’ descriptions, and these provide the bases for the assumption that high levels of religiosity amongst Christians should be positively related to high levels of academic performance: 1) God expects them to excel in whatever they do, 2) God’s prohibition of the usual high school and college distractions such as wild partying, pre-marital sex, drug use and excessive alcohol consumption enabled them to focus more on their academic work, 3) God was always there to help them be successful in their academic endeavours, and 4) Belief in God enabled them to see that education was an important part of their ultimate objective in being spiritually successful. The remaining Christian studies reviewed were all empirical in nature and are described in the following paragraphs. All the studies reviewed were conducted in America, and all but two, found a positive correlation between students’ religiosity and academic performances. Regnerus (Regnerus, 2001) [32] used church attendance as a proxy for high school student

religiosity, and students’ average grades as a proxy for academic performance. McKune and Hoffman (McKune & Hoffmann, 2009) [24] included belief in divinity of sacred scripture and students’ perceptions of the importance of religion in their lives, in addition to church attendance to measure the religiosity of high school students. Like Regnerus, they used average student grades as a measure of academic performances. Both studies found significant positive relationships between religiosity and academic performance. Jeynes (Barnes & *et al.*, 2012) [1], Toldson and Anderson (Toldson & Anderson, 2010) [36] and Butler-Barnes *et al.* (Barnes & *et al.*, 2012) [1] all explored the relationship between religiosity and academic performance amongst African-American high school students. Jeynes (Barnes & *et al.*, 2012) [1] combined students’ levels of religious commitment and attendance of a religious school as a measure of students’ religiosity; Toldson and Anderson and Butler-Barnes *et al.* (Barnes & *et al.*, 2012) [1] also used students’ levels of religious commitment as a measure of students’ religiosity, but combined with it church attendance instead of attendance of a religious school. All three studies used the students’ average grades as a measure of their academic performances. Jeynes (Jeynes, 2002) [16] and Toldson and Anderson (Toldson & Anderson, 2010) [36] both found a positive relationship between the religiosity and academic performances of African-American high school students. On the other hand, Butler-Barnes *et al.* (Barnes & *et al.*, 2012) [1] found that religiosity was not related to academic performance. They gave two possible reasons for not finding the expected positive relationship between these two variables: Firstly, they focused only on African-American males whilst other studies included both males and females. Secondly, they used students’ self-reported average grades instead of student performances in standardized tests.

This study sought to contribute to the growing body of scholarship in this area by exploring the relationship between student religiosity and academic performance from an Islamic perspective. The focus of the study was Muslim accounting students enrolled at the International Islamic University Malaysia. The whole life of a Muslim is governed by the commands of Almighty Allah as contained in the Noble Qur’an and Sunnah (teachings, deeds, sayings, and silent permissions of the Noble Prophet Muhammad [peace be upon him, PBUH]). This is evident by the following verse of the Noble Qur’an: Say, “Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the worlds (Al-an’ am: 162). The strength of a Muslim’s commitment to live his life in accordance with these commands refer to his level of religiosity. Regarding the expected relationship between a student’s religiosity and his academic achievement, the following verse of the Noble Qur’an and hadith below shed light on this issue: And among people and moving creatures and grazing livestock are various colors similarly. Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Forgiving (M. M. Amer & G. H. Awad, 2015) [23].

Al-Bayhaqi noted the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: “Verily, God loves if any of you does a job, he does it with perfection”. Although public schools appear to use better inputs, two previous studies conclude that in Indonesia, private schools are more effective and better-managed than 5 public schools. James *et al.* (1996) [15] find that, after

controlling for exiting test scores, private elementary schools in Indonesia incur lower costs per pupil. They conclude that private management is more efficient at achieving academic quality (James, 1996) ^[15].

The interest of social scientists in Bible literacy has become prominent for two reasons especially: (a) moral education, based primarily on the teachings of the Bible, was a primary thrust in American education until the early 1960s and (b) some asserted that the deterioration in juvenile behavior since the early 1960s is a result, in part, of the removal of the Bible, prayer, and moral teachings from the public schools in the 1960s (Kliebard, 1969; Sikorski, 1993). From the very beginning of permanent European settlements in North America, moral instruction has been a crucial aspect of American education. Stephen Yulish (1980) summed up this truth well: The concept of moral education has always been a crucial underpinning of the American notion of a virtuous republic. Throughout its development, American leaders in education have strenuously sought to condemn mere intellectual training. (p. 80).

Horace Mann, the father of the nation's public schools, asserted that Bible and religious training should be a central focus of public school education. Mann asserted the following: But, it will be said that this great result, in Practical Morals, is a consummation of blessedness that can never be attained without religion; and that no community will ever be religious without a Religious Education. Both of these propositions, I regard as eternal and immutable truths. Devoid of religious principles and religious affections the race can never fall so low that it may sink still lower. (As cited in Kliebard, 1969, p. 73).

The results of the study failed to actualize the expected positive relationship between the religiosity of Muslim accounting students at IIUM and their academic performances. Overall, there was actually a negative, but not significant, correlation between religiosity and academic performance. However, amongst final-year students, there was a small, positive, but insignificant correlation between these two variables. The lack of significant correlation between students' religiosity and their overall academic performances found in this study mirror those found by some previous studies conducted amongst Muslim students (Taghavinia & Motavassel, 2015) ^[35], (Elias & al., 2005) ^[8] However, the results went against some other studies which found that student religiosity did actually correlate with Muslim students' academic performances in specific subjects like Science ^[25], English (Oberoi, 2014) ^[28], Islamic education (Berglund, 2015) ^[2] and law (Canacan, 2014) ^[5]. It is quite interesting to observe that the students that examined the relationship between Muslim students' religiosities and overall academic performance found no correlation, but those that looked at performances in specific subjects did. Ultimately though, Islam does require Muslim students to do their very best in all their academic endeavours. It is important to understand that doing one's best does not guarantee getting the highest grades, as each individual has different God given talents in different

spheres of life that go beyond just getting high grades in school (Zubairu & Sakariyau, 2016) ^[37].

The students' academic performances were determined by their response to the CGPA item in the demographic information section of MAMOC. They had five options to choose from: 3.50. Each option was given a score, a minimum of "0" for CGPA choice 3.50. The students' academic performances were determined by their response to the CGPA item in the demographic information section of MAMOC. They had five options to choose from: 3.50. Each option was given a score, a minimum of "0" for CGPA choice 3.50. The students' academic performances were determined by their response to the CGPA item in the demographic information section of MAMOC. They had five options to choose from: 3.50. Each option was given a score, a minimum of "0" for CGPA choice 3.50.

2. Objectives

The objectives of this research is the following:

- To explore the academic performance of students with reference to religion.

3. Hypothesis

- There is no significant relation on academic performance of school students with reference to religion.

4. Methodology

This study was cross-sectional based on quantitative research method. It was centered on Terminal Examination performance of Trilok Academy Kathmandu, Nepal. The data were obtained using the census sampling. The questionnaires were distributed to 664 students, however, only 418 responses were submitted. Among them 192 were girls. Receive data were coding, recoding and analyzing through computer. The method to be used in analyzing the data was descriptive statistics (tabulation of percentages) using SPSS data statistical package.

5. Findings

The above table shows that there were 336 respondents from Hindus religion, among them 146 (39.9%) secured A+, 91 (24.9%) A, 11 (3.0%) B+, 90 (24.6%) B, 15 (4.1%) C+, 11 (3.0%) C and 2 (0.5%) respectively. Similarly, 40 respondents were from Buddhist religion, among them 12 (30.0%) secured A+, 8 (20.0%) A, 32.5% B, 10.0% C+ and 7.5% C respectively. Without 418 respondents secured 2.9% A+, 1.9% A, 3.1% B, 1.0% C+ and 0.7% C respectively. Likewise, 9 respondents were from Christian religion, among them 1 (11.1%) secured A+, 3 (33.3%) A, 1 (11.1%) B+, 1 (11.1%) B, 1 (11.1%) C+ and 1 (11.1%) C respectively. Then, 3 respondents were from Islamic religion, among them 1 (33.3%) secured A+ and 2 (66.7%) A respectively. In total, 38.3% secured A+, 24.9% A, 3.1% B+, 24.9% B, 4.8% C+, 3.6% C and 0.5% D+ respectively. The results showed that Hindu students have better performance than other religion students.

Table 1: Academic performance of school students with reference of Religion.

			Total						Total	
			A+ (90-100%)	A (80-89.99%)	B+ (70-79.99%)	B (60-69.99%)	c+ (50-59.99%)	C (40-49.99%)		D+ (30-39.99)
Religion	Hindu	Count	146	91	11	90	15	11	2	366
		% within Religion	39.9%	24.9%	3.0%	24.6%	4.1%	3.0%	0.5%	100.0%
		% within Total	91.2%	87.5%	84.6%	86.5%	75.0%	73.3%	100.0%	87.6%
		% of Total	34.9%	21.8%	2.6%	21.5%	3.6%	2.6%	0.5%	87.6%
	Buddhist	Count	12	8	0	13	4	3	0	40
		% within Religion	30.0%	20.0%	0.0%	32.5%	10.0%	7.5%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Total	7.5%	7.7%	0.0%	12.5%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%	9.6%
		% of Total	2.9%	1.9%	0.0%	3.1%	1.0%	0.7%	0.0%	9.6%
	Christian	Count	1	3	2	1	1	1	0	9
		% within Religion	11.1%	33.3%	22.2%	11.1%	11.1%	11.1%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Total	0.6%	2.9%	15.4%	1.0%	5.0%	6.7%	0.0%	2.2%
		% of Total	0.2%	0.7%	0.5%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	2.2%
	Islam	Count	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	3
		% within Religion	33.3%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within Total	0.6%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%
		% of Total	0.2%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%
Total	Count	160	104	13	104	20	15	2	418	
	% within Religion	38.3%	24.9%	3.1%	24.9%	4.8%	3.6%	0.5%	100.0%	
	% within Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	38.3%	24.9%	3.1%	24.9%	4.8%	3.6%	0.5%	100.0%	

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study focused on Religion wise Grading by Nursery to Ten of Trilok Academy, Kathmandu, Nepal. From there were 418 respondents, among them 38.3% Secured A+, 24.9% A, 3.1% B+, 24.9% B, 4.8% C+, 3.6% C and 0.5 D+ respectively. The study recommends to study same issue in other districts and provinces as well as in community and private schools.

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