

The Study on The Factors Affecting Academic Performance Among Diploma in Business Studies Students in Politeknik Mukah

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic which lasted almost 3 years since 2019, impacting most organizations, highlighted a noticeable decline in academic performance at Institutions of Higher Education (HEIs). It is necessary to examine and understand current trends so that the quality of HEI's graduates can be maintained and consistently relevant in the future. Specifically, this study was conducted to investigate the factors that are related to the academic performance of students who are studying Diploma in Business Studies (DPM) in Politeknik Mukah (PMU) Sarawak. The study aims to examine the relationship between the factors of attitudes, interests, and parental encouragements towards academic performance. The respondents for this study were a total of 186 individuals consisting of a Diploma in Business Studies from semester two (2) to semester six (6). The instrument used in the study was a survey questionnaire. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.0 was used for data analysis. The reliability analysis, the descriptive analysis, and the correlation analysis have been operated. The study's results indicate a positive relationship and a significant correlation between the examined factors toward student's academic performance. Thus, some recommendations to the responsible parties are outlined to enhance the academic achievement of Politeknik Mukah students which can lead to producing quality graduates throughout the upcoming period.

Keywords: - Attitude, interests, parental encouragement, academic performance

1. Introduction

As soon as the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (KPT) announced that learning sessions would be physically allowed again, students began to prepare to enter lectures as usual. However, the thing that causes concern is the declining academic performance of students. For most students in higher education institutions, academic success is their primary objective. Academic excellence is the demonstrated ability to perform, produce, and excel in academic learning. It is evident through achieving high scores and superior performance in academic pursuits, often measured by the cumulative grade point average (CGPA). This excellence represents the pinnacle of intellectual development and skills, as well as employability for individuals. Achieving academic excellence requires effort, enthusiasm, and interest from students as they grasp knowledge and skills. Furthermore, academic excellence is driven by the need and desire for advanced education to meet the demands of technologically challenging professions (Peretomode & Ikoya, 2019). Looking at previous studies, Chzin & Surat (2021) stated, "there are two main factors that affect students' academic excellence, which are external factors and internal factors. External factors are pressures and external elements that encourage and help students to succeed in the academic field while internal factors are the attitudes

and efforts of the students themselves to succeed in academics". In line with the vision of PMU which wants to be a leading TVET institution in the region, all related parties should work together in the effort to maintain and improve the level of academic excellence of students in Politeknik Mukah.

A trend of continuous decline is shown in one of the performance indicators i.e. the number of students earned a CGPA of 3.00 and above in a particular semester. In Academic Session I: 2021/2022, the report shows 80.1% students managed to achieve CGPA 3.00 and above. However, in Academic Session II: 2022/2023, only 50.9% students achieved, and it continued to fall to 34.3% in Academic Session I: 2022/2023, then Session II: 2022/2023, it fell lower to 31.8%. The declining trend in academic performance among Diploma in Business Studies students is a cause for concern because it will show that Politeknik Mukah failed to maintain the quality of the students produced. This trend necessitates immediate intervention to uphold the quality of education and the reputation of Politeknik Mukah. If this is not curbed immediately, it may also reflect a negative image towards Politeknik Mukah as a whole. Therefore, this study generally aims to scrutinize several factors that may have impact towards students' academic excellence.

Several objectives would want to be highlighted in this case study, including the study of the relationship

between attitudes, interests, and parental encouragement toward academic achievement. The purpose of this study is to determine whether the factors analysed will have an impact on the academic achievement of Diploma of Business Studies, Politeknik Mukah students. Furthermore, the importance of this study is that it allows us to determine at any level the factors that most contribute to the student's level of academic achievement. We will be able to enhance and improve students' achievement if the attitudes, interests, and parents' encouragement are significant in this study. All parties at Politeknik Mukah can work together to increase students' academic performance through numbers of initiatives for instance by organizing programs with parents and diversifying academic activities depending on students' interests and attitudes. The results of this study may influence the effectiveness of Politeknik Mukah which can give rise to quality students as well as holistic graduates in line with its mission. Therefore, in this work, authors proposed three (3) hypotheses as below:

H1: Student's attitudes have a significant and positive influence towards the academic excellence of students of the Diploma of Business Studies at the Commerce Department.

H2: Student's interest has a significant and positive influence towards the academic excellence of students of the Diploma of Business Studies at the Commerce Department.

H3: Parental encouragement has a significant and positive influence towards the academic excellence of students of the Diploma of Business Studies at the Commerce Department.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Academic Performance

Nazri & Salamuddin (2019) explained that students' academic performance can be measured by looking at the value of scores or points accumulated through exams or continuous evaluation. This performance can be seen in its value and its level of excellence can be determined. According to Gosman et al. (2020), academic excellence is defined by evaluating the academic performance of students which involves evaluating the results they achieve in tests or exams. This assessment allows the breakdown of their achievements into various criteria, including excellent, good, average, weak, or failed. By examining students' academic performance results, we can measure the extent of their mastery of the subject.

Previous studies have shown that many factors affect students' academic excellence. A study conducted by Ahmad & Ambotang (2020) showed that there is a substantial relationship between emotional intelligence of the students and their academic performance. This finding highlights the

importance of having a systematic approach to emotional management to promote a high level of emotional intelligence among students to achieve academic excellence among students. Meanwhile, findings from a study conducted by Imran et al. (2023) reported a direct relationship between the level of motivation of the students and their academic success. While Ghazali et al. (2023) asserted in a study he has found that most positive parental relationships are also able to influence the academic excellence factor of students. However, Fadzillah & Bahari (2019) study revealed that students' academic performance is influenced by early exposure factors and parental insistence. The results of the study of Ghani et al. (2023) concluded that there is no significant correlation between early exposure to factors that affect student academic excellence. Therefore, the author plans to focus this study on only three factors: attitude, interests, and parental encouragement towards the academic performance of Diploma in Business Studies students at the Commerce Department, Politeknik Mukah

2.2 Attitudes

According to a study by Chzin & Surat (2021), students' opinions about courses had a big influence on how well they did academically. Research indicates that students who approach a subject with positivity typically demonstrate higher levels of accomplishment, while those who approach it with negativity typically display lower levels of achievement. However, Loviyani & Rifai (2019) contend that to establish a caring and encouraging learning environment, one must have a good attitude toward students and education. Students are more likely to be inspired and motivated by teachers who have faith in their abilities and who approach their work with passion.

Gasong (2018) argues that attitude serves as a driving force for students, encouraging them to engage in the learning process. Specifically, attitudes towards a particular subject can be demonstrated through students' emotions and behavior, whether they accept or reject the subject. This can be reflected in their calm or restless attitude. Kariya (2020) supports this notion, finding that student attitude factors significantly affect academic achievement. Similarly, Fadzil et al. (2022) conducted a study that emphasized the importance of students' attitudes and motivations in determining their success in achieving academic excellence. These factors have a profound effect on the teaching and learning process, which will ultimately affect the performance of students' academic excellence. There is a significant positive relationship between attitude and academic excellence.

2.3 Interest

In the study conducted by Nugroho et al. (2019), interest is defined as a strong drive or motivation that makes someone want to strive with all their might to achieve what they desire and reach their dreams. According to the study by Aminy & Andiana (2019), interest is a tendency to pay attention to a person, activity, or situation that becomes the main object of that interest. The statement of interest is a focus of attention that unintentionally arises with full desire and depends on talent and environment.

Conversely, according to the study by Lastri et al. (2020), students' interest in a course is based on the process of improving student learning. This study states that the interest present in a person will influence the learning process and academic achievement. Active student involvement in learning is important to identify their interests. This study also states that when students are interested, it helps them think and understand something better.

The study presented by Faizi et al. (2020) states that a student who is enthusiastic, and courageous in facing all challenges and competition, always strives to improve their performance, not just to pass to avoid failure. If someone applies interest in their academics, it will foster diligence in them to strive to achieve their goals. Students will also work hard and be responsible for performing well in their classes. However, according to Mantihal & Maat (2020), the use of more modern 21st-century learning materials in the learning process can increase students' interest in the subjects being studied and help develop students' understanding of difficult aspects. There is a significant and positive relationship between interest and academic excellence.

2.4 Parental Encouragement

In a study conducted by Sharif (2017), in a family institution, parents as the head of the family play a very important role in generating a harmonious, knowledgeable, competitive society and produce people who excel in achieving a both ambitions of academic progress and character development equilibrium.

Previous studies have shown that many factors influence parents' drive toward students. According to a study conducted by Mata et al. (2018), it stated that parents' support for students will affect their motivation and achievement. Parents refer to the way parents engage, support, nurture and teach their children in their daily experiences to help them thrive and succeed. However, a study conducted by Gosman et al. (2020) in the Maslow Theory, found that student academic success was greatly influenced by the level of involvement and support from parents and their family backgrounds. This is because students need their basic physiological needs to be met, as well as a sense of security, compassion, and self-esteem, to

develop their full potential. Therefore, parents need to ensure that their children have access to the necessary learning materials such as writing tools, books, bags, shoes, and clothes to go to school, as this creates a comfortable and supportive learning environment.

A study by Geng et al. (2022) found that parental support, directly and indirectly, affected the physical health of students. There is a significant and positive relationship between parental motivation and academic excellence.

3. Methodology

To identify the factors that influence students' academic performance, we have outlined our methodological approach using purposive sampling methods specific to our study scope. Next, we collected data using quantitative methods through questionnaires distributed via Google Forms links and shared on WhatsApp and Telegram platforms. Finally, we analyzed the data using the Likert scale.

This study uses a homogeneous purposive sampling method which is a non-random technique selected specifically to be coordinated with our research.

Homogeneous purposive sampling involves selecting a sample that shares the same characteristics or set of characteristics, such as age, work culture, or life experience (Patton, 1990). This method emphasizes the similarity of these characteristics and their relevance to the research topic.

The sample size for this study is based on the table of Krecjie & Morgan (1970). Our study population consists of 307 number of Diploma in Business Studies students in Commerce Department Politeknik Mukah who are currently active status in the academic session. A total of 186 respondents completed the questionnaire that we distributed through the WhatsApp and Telegram platforms.

We conducted descriptive analysis, reliability tests, and correlation aimed at explaining the research subject based on the variables. Descriptive analysis has been translated into the form of frequency distribution tables, which include demographic information of respondents such as gender, semester, and others. Minimum values and standard deviations have also been obtained from respondents' feedback on all items in the questionnaire instrument.

Furthermore, the reliability testing method refers to the concept of the accuracy and stability of a study or questionnaire measure. This is done to determine whether the measure provides consistent responses when the concept is measured to the same respondents. In addition, correlation analysis was also conducted. Correlation refers to a statistical measure to determine the extent of the relationship between each variable, namely the Independent Variable & Dependent Variables. These two variables were later tested using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

A comprehensive questionnaire consisted of 18 items which adopted and adapted from Kariya (2020), Ghani et al. (2023), Wijaya et al. (2022) and Dorner et al. (2007) has been constructed with the use of Likert scales as measurement tools. A Likert scale is used where respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a list of statements related to the variables being studied. The scale consists of five response categories ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".

4. Finding & Analysis

As a result of the findings according to demographic distribution, a total of 186 respondents with 65 people (34.9%) were male students and 121 people (65.1%) were female students. The results also show Semester results of 5 semesters' students, which is semester 2 to semester 6 session I 2023/2024. Semester 2 totaled 41 respondents (22.0%), semester 3 totaled 31 respondents (16.7%), semester 4, 37 respondents (19.9%), semester 5, totaled 43 respondents, and respondents for Semester 6 totaled 34 respondents (18.3%). The findings also show that based on the Point Average Collection (CGPA) for Business Studies Diploma students' session II 2022/2023 who obtained grades 1.51-2.00 there were only 8 students (4.3%), for HPNM 2.01 - 2.50 there were 23 respondents, for grade 2.52 – 3.00 a total of 70 people (37.6%), for grade 3.01 – 3.50 there are a total of 65 students (10.8%). While for grades 3.51 – 4.00, it is by obtaining as many as 20 students (10.8%) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Student achievement according to Point Average Collection (CGPA)

CGPA	N	Percent (%)
1.51 – 2.00	8	4.3
2.01 – 2.50	23	12.4
2.51 – 3.00	70	37.6
3.01 – 3.50	65	34.9
3.51 – 4.00	20	10.8

The overall findings obtained from the reliability test (Cronbach Alpha) obtained a Cronbach Alpha Value of 0.837 as shown in Table 2. These values can be accepted for their reliability according to the interpretation of the Cronbach Alpha score according to Ghazali & Sufean (2016), which is a Cronbach Alpha value higher than 0.60, showing that this instrument is good and can be used in real studies.

Table 2. Reliability coefficient value of questionnaire items

Variables	Total Items	Cronbach Alpha
Attitude	6	0.797 (high)
Interest	6	0.867 (high)
Parental Encouragement	6	0.847 (high)

As for the mean analysis, according to Table 3, the average mean score is 3.89 with a moderate and acceptable standard deviation. This means that most students do their job well in paying attention during class with the highest mean average being 4.27. The next highest score is for the frequency with which students revise their lessons in their free time, with a score of 4.10.

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation of attitudes factor

No.	Item	Mean	SD
1	I always fully focus during the learning session.	4.27	0.724
2	I often revise lessons in my spare time.	4.10	0.714
3	I always make brief notes and notes during the learning session.	3.99	0.720
4	I try to complete the assignment given.	3.72	0.805
5	I made practice of past exam questions.	3.51	0.890
6	I like to interact with the lecturer in class.	3.76	0.790
Average Mean Score and Overall Standard Deviation (SD)		3.89	0.773

However, the lowest average score was for how often students checked past exam questions, with a score of 3.51. This means that students rarely review and practice past exam questions as they should. This finding on average states that the academic achievement of students can be influenced by the attitude of a student who has a positive attitude towards their studies and tends to achieve better grades and academic results compared to those who have a negative attitude.

The results of the analysis from Table 4 show that on average the mean and standard deviation of DPM students' interest factors in PMU in learning affect academic achievement, which is an overall mean value of 3.88 and a standard deviation of 0.727. Students' interest in learning together in groups with friends shows the highest mean of 4.13 followed by interest and the earnestness of the students to prepare their study schedule with a mean score of 3.95. This shows that students are not too attached to the schedule that has been prepared by the PMU, and students have their way of starting and organizing their learning.

Table 4. Mean and standard deviation of interest factor

No.	Item	Mean	SD
1	I always have the determination to get high marks in every assignment.	3.90	0.667
2	I always try to solve a difficult task first before referring with the lecturer.	3.67	0.703
3	I always ask the lecturer when I don't understand during the learning session.	3.96	0.712
4	I study in groups with friends.	4.13	0.724

5	I have my own study schedule.	3.95	0.780
6	I try to find additional information for each subject.	3.70	0.781
Average Mean Score and Overall Standard Deviation (SD)		3.88	0.727

In terms of parental encouragement (see Table 5), most DPM students at PMU provide moderate value, which is by mean score of 3.91 and a standard deviation value of 0.767. Parents of students have a good grasp on the learning system involving students earning a high mean score of 4.12. The lowest mean value for parental encouragement is parent encourages students to get a high value in their studies with mean score of 3.72, however, this value is also a moderate mean value. In essence, parents have realized that education is not merely an institutional-based endeavor but rather a lifelong journey that starts at home. Their unwavering support and motivation have created fertile ground for the intellectual and personal growth of their children, ensuring they are well-equipped to whether challenges and embrace the opportunities ahead.

Table 5. Mean and standard deviation of parental encouragement factor

No.	Item	Mean	SD
1	My parents helped me while I was studying	3.76	0.799
2	Parents always provide motivation and encouragement for me to learn	3.95	0.766
3	My parents pushed me to get high value in my studies	3.72	0.785
4	Mothers know what steps to take when my parents are worried, I get a bad Education	3.95	0.766
5	My parents tried to learn ways to help me raise and grow in lessons.	3.96	0.760
6	My parents have a good understanding of the learning systems that I have involved	4.12	0.726
Average Mean Score and Overall Standard Deviation (SD)		3.91	0.767

In this study, correlation analysis was also conducted as in Table 6. Correlation analysis is used to determine the strength between two variables (D. Purba & M. Purba, 2022). Pearson's correlation value indicates a significant relationship with a value of 0.01. R values mean, the value for identifying the strength and direction of the relationship through the correlation coefficient is either strong or weak and positive or negative towards the dependent variable and the independent variable. To assess the strength and direction of relations between variables, the researcher used Sugiyono (2008) interpretation of the correlation coefficient.

Table 6. References of correlation coefficient (r)

Coefficient Correlation Value (r)	Association Interpretation
0.80 – 1.000	Very Strong

0.60 – 0.799	Strong
0.40 – 0.599	Average
0.20 – 0.399	Weak
0.00 – 0.199	Very Weak

All of Pearson's correlations in Table 7 show r values in the weak and average categories which are in the range of $r = 0.324$ up to $r = 0.453$. After the study was done in its entirety, it was found that all three factors studied had a positive and significant relationship to the academic excellence of the students.

Table 7. Correlation analysis

Variable	Attitude	Interest	Parental Encouragement	Academic Performance (CGPA)
Attitude				
Pearson Correlation	1	.576**	.720**	.324**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
Interest				
Pearson Correlation	.576**	1	.872**	.453**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
Parental Encouragement				
Pearson Correlation	.720**	.872**	1	.452**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
Academic Performance (CGPA)				
Pearson Correlation	.324**	.453**	.452**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	

However, the researchers proposed several appropriate components based on factors that have been studied from the scope of the individual up to the stakeholders to be carried out in future to have difference angle of perspective which explains the relationship of the factors studies towards academic performance. Thus, the researcher suggests the best approach and methods that can be used to contribute to outstanding academic performance for Diploma in Business Studies students at Politeknik Mukah, being a beacon of academic excellence, producing graduates in highly skilled and globally competitive business fields.

5. Discussion

This study shows that the factors of parental encouragement, interests, and attitudes have a positive relationship with students' academic performance. Based on the scope of the study, the Diploma in Business Studies student at Politeknik Mukah, the findings showed a satisfactory overall value for the three factors. These results support the findings of Fadzil et al. (2022) that emphasize the importance of students' attitudes and motivations in determining their success in the achievement of academic excellence. High-interest factors also parallel the findings of the study by Lastri et al. (2020), saying that students' interest in a course is based on the process of improving student learning. The relationship between students' interest and academic excellence, where the

correlation value is 0.453. Apart from that, there is a positive relationship between student academic excellence and interest. Positive past experiences with learning can influence students' interest in academic excellence. To give a specific example, students should create detailed strategies so that they can identify in advance what their skills and interests are.

For the parental encouragement factor, the Pearson correlation value is 0.452 (moderate) higher than the Pearson correlation value of the attitude factor. In addition, the high parental drive factor supports the findings in Mata et al. (2018) stating that parental support for students will influence their motivation and achievement. For instance, parents who are concerned about their children's learning often ask about the development of their learning journey and lend help to children in terms of learning that they do not know much about.

Pearson's correlation test results for attitudes show that there is a moderately weak relationship with a correlation value of 0.324. Apart from that, a positive relationship also exists between students' attitudes and academic excellence. A study from Maison et al. (2020) in the year also found that the results of their study found a positive relationship between the attitude and activity of students in subjects at HEI. Students should reap a positive and self-confident attitude in each of them. Students who have a positive mindset are more motivated and able to concentrate on their education. When people have confidence in themselves, they are more likely to view obstacles as chances to improve.

6. Conclusion & Recommendations

In conclusion, based on the findings of this study, the objective of the study has been achieved and the question of study has been revealed. This study comprehensively examined the factors affecting the academic performance of Diploma in Business Studies students at Politeknik Mukah. Through a detailed analysis of attitudes, interests, and parental encouragement, it was found that each of these factors significantly influences academic excellence, albeit to varying degrees.

The study demonstrated that students with positive attitudes towards their studies tend to achieve higher academic performance. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that motivation and a positive mindset are critical to academic success. Students' interests were shown to have a substantial impact on their academic outcomes. Those who are genuinely interested in their subjects are more likely to engage deeply and perform well. This underscores the importance of aligning academic programs with students' intrinsic interests to foster better learning outcomes. In addition, the role of parents in motivating and supporting their children was highlighted as a crucial factor. The findings suggest

that students who receive substantial parental support are more likely to excel academically.

The declining trend in academic performance among Diploma in Business Studies students is a cause for concern. This trend necessitates immediate intervention to uphold the quality of education and the reputation of Politeknik Mukah. The results from this study provide a foundation for targeted initiatives to enhance student performance. Based on the research results obtained, there are several recommendations for the attitude, interest, and encouragement of parents. Among them, for the attitude factor, we have thought that Politeknik Mukah or the Commerce Department should initiate more motivational programs and fun activities to inspire students in the future. To enhance academic performance at Politeknik Mukah, it is recommended to implement regular workshops and mentorship programs to foster positive student attitudes, review and adapt the curriculum to align with student interests, and promote engaging extracurricular activities. As we already know, for the encouragement factor of parents, the management of institutions may organize several programs with parents and students' involvement. This can encourage the involvement of parents and support for children in education, even the importance of producing students who are successful in terms of learning and more effective development in the future. Additionally, organizing regular parent-teacher meetings and workshops can strengthen parental support. These combined efforts will help create a supportive and motivating educational environment, essential for reversing the declining trend in academic performance and ensuring students are well-prepared for future professional challenges.

By implementing these recommendations, Politeknik Mukah can work towards reversing the declining trend in academic performance, ensuring that students are well-prepared to meet the demands of technologically advanced and competitive professional environments. This concerted effort will help Politeknik Mukah maintain its status as a leading TVET institution, producing graduates who are not only academically excellent but also holistically developed. These findings and recommendations highlight the collaborative effort needed from educators, parents, and students to achieve academic excellence. By addressing the identified factors, Politeknik Mukah can foster an environment conducive to higher academic achievement and personal growth for its students.

In addition, in order to overcome the limitation of this study that was limited to Diploma in Business Studies students only, researchers in the future can carry out the same study by enlarging the study factor by adding the scope of the sample population. At the same time, it is suggested to increase the sample size by involving more students in the study so that the data is more accurate and robust. Further research should also explore additional factors that may influence

academic performance, such as socio-economic status, peer influence, and teaching methodologies which are untested in this study. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how these factors interact over time to affect academic outcomes.

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