



## Developing study habits inventory for secondary level students in Nepal: A psycho-educational survey

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### ABSTRACT

Twenty-one standardized non-repeated 1-5 rank order questionnaires were administered to 480 students from twelve districts of Nepal. Twenty-four schools (12 governments and 12 private) and ten boys and ten girls of average level from each school were chosen randomly for the survey. The questionnaires covered the six different areas of studies e.g. foundation of the study, hardworking, interpersonal relationship, study habits, study skills and study related problems.

This study found noticeable similarities and differences in various issues related to study habit among government and private schools students. About 50 percent Nepalese students like to study in silent and free of an interrupted room. For 36.25 percent Nepalese students (Table-2) qualified teachers and effective teaching methods are the major factors that determine the effective study habits. About 28.95 percent Nepalese students believe that aim and future vision is the key motivating factors for the effective study habits (Table-3). According to the 36.04 percent Nepalese students the major problems they are facing in the school is unhygienic environment (Table-4).

About 36.87 percent Nepalese students believe that encouragement from the teachers and parents play an important role to proceed ahead even in repeated failure (Table-5). About 39.58 percent Nepalese students are eagerly seeking to be counseled how they can improve their study habits. The survey has found that most of the Nepalese students spend daily two to three hours for the house related works. They should know how to invest their time according to the importance of the task (Table-7).

### INTRODUCTION

Study habits (SH) are key component for the effective study. Without established healthy study habits effective study is not possible. The students who have not developed the habit of studying regularly and according to order face various study-related problems and develop negative attitude toward study. Various studies show that students who know the study methods have positive attitude

towards study and have better performance in the examination.<sup>1</sup>

If the students know the proper study procedure, they will certainly attain the better performance and are able to solve the study related problems more appropriately. Study habit is a complex skill. To develop this skill requires an understanding of the effective study techniques and disciplined practice in applying them. Developing study habit is a long

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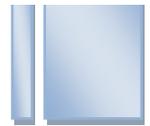
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process. Buying or even reading any wonderful book will not work as a formula to develop effective study habit. Effective study habits are possible by improving the quality of instruction, teaching materials, educational environment and the student's keen interest in the study and a habit to work according to plan and timetable.<sup>2</sup> Effective study habits include six different areas. To make study habits strong and effective, there is a need to pay proper and balance attention in these areas.

### **Study Foundation**

This includes a healthy family environment, study room, all the needed or required books and relevant materials, parental support and motivation, suitable study table, chair, book racks and some other good books that help to enhance study desire. There is a close relationship between effective study and a favorable study environment. Our environment plays a major role in keeping us mentally healthy. A good study environment enhances attention, motivation and study mood.

Students have to study in a place where they are not likely to be interrupted by friends, roommates, or relatives and other disturbances. A conducive learning environment that has limited distractions should be selected. Always study by yourself, unless you are working with a teacher participating in a discussion or study group that is completely thoughtful about the subject.<sup>3</sup>

### **Some Laws to become laborious students**

This includes some laws that are very much essential to study properly e.g. know the proper procedure and method of study for different subjects, use a weekly schedule to organize study, work and social activities, set study goal for each subject, take regular guidance and be submissive to the parents and teachers, have a balanced zeal and motivation, take rest, accomplish the task and study goals efficiently.

Albert Bandura, a famous Canadian professor in Psychology, began to see personality as an interaction between psychological processes, the environment, and our behavior. He noticed that those who felt more in control of their lives (had high

self-efficacy) behaved differently and personally achieved more.<sup>4</sup>

Most successful people have a tendency to be 'future oriented'. When students are engaged in their academic studies, this should motivate them sufficiently to encourage them to be future oriented. If they are not motivated, then it is going to be hard to engage with their learning or manage their time effectively. However, too much of this orientation can make them a workaholic; so they do need a balance.

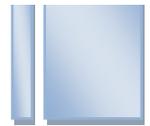
### **Healthy interpersonal Relationship**

There is a close association between interpersonal relationship and study habits. A balanced diet and a favorable study environment are more related to physical health where as healthy interpersonal relationships are related to psychological health. Students should be very careful in maintaining a good relationship with friends, teachers, neighbors and family members.

Usually, young people learn many things from their friends both good and bad habits. Students should have a proper knowledge about a balanced relationship e.g. never compare with others and get frustrated, share your opinions without hesitation, never revenge to anybody, be careful to express your anger and speech because this damages relationship, never gossip, backbite your friends and people, use your resources to help your friends as much as you can, be careful to associate with the friends who have antisocial and immoral behaviors.

People are some of your best motivators as well as worst motivators of your study. Therefore, choose people who are serious about their study. Students can protect their study time from disturbing visitors by posting a sign, "Do not disturb" and tell them that you're busy. In summary, managing your time is a skill which can be developed with practice.

Working with others is always a balance between maintaining our own individuality and becoming a member of a group. Being a member of such a team, therefore, needs more skill and students need to know the components of team building in order to



make this work efficiently. There are various aspects of working in a diverse team. We live with diversity across our lives e.g. different types of people, different abilities, different subject disciplines and different cultures, so students need to be an expert in balancing these all for the fruitful learning.

### Developing effective study habits

"The strength of a man's virtue.... is measured by his habitual acts." Human beings are creatures of habit if we don't develop good habits, we will develop bad ones (Pascal). Developing effective study habits is a process. Study habit is a complex skill. To develop this skill requires the understanding of the effective study techniques and disciplined practice in applying them. Developing study habit is a long process. Buying or even reading any wonderful book will not work as a formula to develop effective study habit.

To develop effective study habits students have to keep certain things in minds e.g. regular study habits according to schedule, proper care on physical and mental health, note taking and listening skill, ability to see the short term and long term benefits of your study, ability to visualize achieving the study goals and using that for mankind.

Research of Bradley indicates that people tend to attribute positive behaviors to themselves and negative behaviors to external factors. That is to say; human beings are most likely to take credit for their good or praiseworthy actions and to deny responsibility for their bad acts or failures.<sup>5</sup>

### Effective study techniques

Experts in education and psychological fields have developed various techniques to study effectively. Each student has a unique method which they develop from childhood. Once we develop a habit, it is hard to break. Students should know the proper techniques to study all subjects. There is an appropriate procedure for doing everything, when we know the proper time and procedure to do, it will be easy, and there will be high performance and great success.

Professor Noel Entwistle, a prominent researcher into how people learn, has been conducting studies for

many years into what makes students tick and how they go about the business of studying.<sup>4</sup> His notion of 'surface' and 'deep' approach can be applied this way:

- 1) Surface approach = memorization of facts/information
- 2) Deep approach = understanding of facts/information

Students should know how to use their time for reflective thinking, change and adjust speed of reading, take time to think about the information in the chapter, continue despite the problem, if a matter is to be learnt by heart memorize it part by part, be able to summarize the chapter in your own words, be able to identify the main idea of the chapter, get regular feedback from your teacher, practice old questions to prepare for the tests, etc.<sup>6</sup>

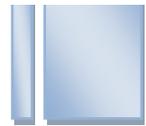
Study techniques assist students in to become systematic readers. These techniques will help students to study better and develop efficient study habits as the subject requires.<sup>7</sup> Different authorities have evolved a number of study techniques in the field, some of the widely used techniques are as follows:-

- 1) OK<sub>4</sub>R = Overview, key ideas, Read, Recall, Reflect, Review
- 2) PQRS = Preview, Question, Read, Summarize, Test
- 3) SQ<sub>3</sub>R = Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review
- 4) PQ<sub>4</sub>R = Preview, Question, Read, Reflect, Recite, Review

### Overcoming study related psychological problems:

The students have to manage many things appropriately to make their study effective. They alone cannot arrange everything properly, so they need help from parents and teachers. The parents and teachers are the ones who motivate them regularly and create a favorable environment where students can apply and practice the effective study methods at optimum.

Concentration is a mental skill which can be developed with practice, much like building more muscles with daily exercise. Concentration involves



monitoring not only your thoughts and emotions but also your environment. All of the best intentions to concentrate can be destroyed by distractions. Get up early, before any potential distractors have woken up. Get to your study place and get to work. For more normal times of study, do what you can to control your study environment and then exercise firm personal discipline to get your stipulated work done.<sup>8</sup> Students have to use techniques to eliminate internal and external distractors.

External distractors are disruptions caused by things in your physical environment, such as noises, people, television, enticing or harsh weather, clutter, and lighting. You can use strategies to train your mind and your attention not to respond to external distractors-unless of course they involve an emergency or potential danger. Internal distractors are disruptions that occur inside you physically or emotionally. Worries, stress, anxiety, depression, sickness, hunger, pain, daydreams, and anticipation of upcoming events are examples of internal distractors that reduce your level of concentration.

However, some groups of students are more likely to feel the pressures than others. Stressors can be external or internal. External stressors refer to things outside of us that we have to deal with, e.g. exams, coursework, finances, etc. Internal stress refers to our own personality characteristics, or if we are dealing with some incapacity or illness. So, all stress is an interplay between what we bring to the event and the event itself. The imbalance between internal and external stressors can affect our psychological and physiological well-being and cause stress.<sup>4</sup>

Wasting precious time unnecessarily in watching television, computer, and mobile is also considered as addiction. Change your mind and confess your mistake and adopt praiseworthy behavior if you have a habit of watching pornography, masturbation, premarital sexual thoughts and activities, homosexual relation, and other immoral behavior. These behaviors will damage your physical, psychological, moral and educational life.

Richard Lazarus, an eminent psychologist who won the prestigious award of 'American Psychologist' in

2002, claimed that stress and anxiety mainly occur when we believe we can't cope with the problem we perceive as stressful.<sup>4</sup> When we see this problem as overwhelming and feel we have no way of escaping or solving it, we experience anxiety or stress. However, we don't all see the same events as stressful.

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

### Participants

Participants in this study were grade nine students from Nepal. The population in this study were boys (n=240), and girls (n=240) and the average level students (school principals were requested to select the average students for the survey) were selected for the survey.

### Study Settings

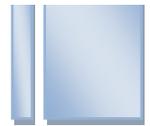
The questionnaire was developed in 2014 in Kathmandu. The survey was carried in twelve government and twelve private schools of Nepal from twelve districts (e.g. Nuwakot, Kavre, Bhaktapur, Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Sindhupalchowk, Dhading, Rupendahi, Jhapa, Banke, Dailekh, and Magdi) to collect data. The data were coded, analyzed and interpreted using SPSS, version 16.

### Ethical Approval

The Central Department of Psychology, Kirtipur Kathmandu under Tribhuvan University, approved the study.

### Questionnaire Development and Testing

Twenty-one standardized 1-5 rank order questionnaires were developed through analyzing the study related six factors e.g. foundation of the study, hardworking, interpersonal relationship, study habits, study skills and study related problems. After having a pilot study and thorough evaluation by experts. Each statement had five possible responses. Three reviews were carried out by the expert in this field e.g. Professor Dr. Shishir Subba, Dr. Val Inchly (U.K.) and Dr. Irmgard Spittler, (Germany) to select the best in terms of clarity of the questions, accuracy of the knowledge measured. This process reduced the number of statements from 26. After item analysis, the total numbers of statements in the final



questionnaire were 17. The responses to the questionnaire took 15 to 25 minutes.

To test the test-retest reliability, 100 same samples were chosen within the time of two months. The Pearson correlation of pretest and posttest was 1 in all six areas of study habits, which was highly significant at 0.01 level. The questionnaire was administered in twenty-four schools (government twelve and private twelve) in groups after the motivating lectures under the supervision of the authors. Some students completed the questionnaire in average twenty minutes. The questionnaires were presented in both English and Nepalese language.

### Item Analysis

Item analysis involves statistical analysis of the results of a test administration to identify which items can be retained and which need to be discarded. The results were analyzed for difficulty with and discrimination of the items, and only those items meeting the analysis criteria were retained. Out of 21 items again three items were rejected (6, 13, 20, and 21). Only 17 items were chosen for the final inventory.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The raw data from responses of each participant were coded numerically. Data were entered and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 16.0, SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). A number of statistical tests were performed to assess the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. The Pearson correlation of pretest was 1 and significant at 0.01 level.

### Pretest and posttest:

Pre and posttest were taken to find the correlation of the questionnaires. A hundred students from Kathmandu valley took part in these both pre and posttest within the time interval of two months. The correlation between these two tests was found highly significant.

### RESULTS

Table 1 represents the type of environment for better learning. It was found that 50% of the students preferred silent and interruption free environment for better learning, both in government and private schools, followed by neat, clean and hygienic environment. However there was low preference for comfortable chairs and space for better learning.

**Table 1 Type of Environment for Better Learning**

Responses	Government schools of Nepal			Private schools of Nepal			Total
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
Silent and free of interruptions	64	67	131	52	57	109	240
Neat, clean and hygienic	30	31	61	19	24	43	104
Fresh air, sunlight and warm room	13	7	20	20	18	38	58
Enough books and materials	11	9	20	13	8	21	41
Comfortable table, chair, and space	2	6	8	16	13	29	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>480</b>

Table 2 shows the factors determining effective studies. It was found that, qualified teachers (36%), motivation from teachers and parents (21%) and understanding the subject matter were crucial factors that determined the effective studies. The provision of study materials and cooperation from friends were least preferred options that determined the effective study.

The motivating factors to do well in studies included clear aim and future vision (28%) for students of both

government and private schools and past success and good results (24%). Fifty three students from government schools preferred good books and materials compared to only thirty students from private schools, which clearly determines the difference in status of children in government and private schools (Table 3).



**Table 2 Factors Determining Effective Study**

Responses	Government schools of Nepal			Private schools of Nepal			Total
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
Qualified and gifted teachers	51	42	93	40	41	81	174
Motivation from teachers and parents	28	16	44	30	28	58	102
High level of understanding (foundation)	18	26	44	24	35	59	103
Materials and pocket money	3	13	16	6	5	11	27
Helpful and cooperative friends	20	23	43	20	11	31	74
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>480</b>

**Table 3 Motivating Factors to do Well in Studies**

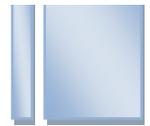
Responses	Government schools of Nepal			Private schools of Nepal			Total
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
Past success and good results	25	35	60	28	29	57	117
Good books and materials	29	24	53	20	10	30	83
Aim and future vision	33	39	72	30	37	67	139
Practical and applicable education	17	10	27	24	20	44	71
Encouragement from teacher, parents	16	12	28	18	24	42	70
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>480</b>

It was found that 40.5% students from government school faced problems of unhygienic environment compared to 31.6% students from private schools which included water, sanitation and hygiene, toilet facilities and waste management. Of the total students, the other major problems were: bullying, conflict and bad company of friends (20%) and

problems related to school administration and facilities (17.7%). Traditional teaching method was found to be more prevalent in private schools compared to government schools, while the problem of teacher being absent frequently, not qualified and not friendly was more in government schools (Table 4).

**Table 4 Major Problems Faced by Students in School**

Responses	Government schools of Nepal			Private schools of Nepal			Total
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
Unhygienic environment	49	48	97	36	40	76	173
Teacher (absent, less qualified & not friendly)	17	17	34	11	14	25	59
School administration and facilities	19	22	41	27	17	44	85
Traditional teaching method	11	8	19	24	24	48	67
Friends (bullying, conflict and bad company)	24	25	49	22	25	47	96
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>480</b>



Among Nepalese students, it was found that support from teachers and parents (36.8%) were the major inspiring factors to move ahead in life in spite of repeated failures, followed by having clear future long term goals (25.2%). The responses of having

clear future long term goals was more among the students of government school compared to that of students of private school (Table 5).

**Table 5 Inspiring Factors to move ahead in spite of Repeated Failures**

Responses	Government schools of Nepal			Private schools of Nepal			Total
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
Support from teacher and parents	37	40	77	53	47	100	177
Commitment (I can do and self-determination)	20	17	37	19	27	46	83
Clear future goal (to have long term goal)	32	40	72	21	28	49	121
Improve self-confidence level (be positive)	21	16	37	16	14	30	67
Inspirational model (books, biographies, etc.)	10	7	17	11	4	15	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>480</b>

Counseling will be effective when students realize their needs and seek it. Counseling will bring a positive result in the academic endeavor. Both government school (41.2%) and the private schools

(37.9%) of Nepal felt the need of counseling in developing study habits. Also, they felt the counseling needs in other areas e.g. time management (23.9%), steps of hard work (17.08%), relationships techniques (11.67) and overcoming low self-esteem (7.7%) (Table 6).

**Table 6 Areas of Counseling Need to do well in Studies**

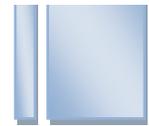
Responses	Government schools of Nepal			Private schools of Nepal			Total
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
Study habits (techniques and habit formation)	53	46	99	46	45	91	190
Relationship techniques	13	19	32	14	10	24	56
Time management (balance schedule)	23	23	46	35	34	69	115
Procedure of hard work (steps)	24	23	47	13	22	35	82
Overcoming low self-esteem	7	9	16	12	9	21	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>480</b>

Average time spent on different activities is the indicator how the habits of Nepalese students are being formed. Besides, school studies most of the students spent their time with friends (above 3 hours,

155 persons) and household related works (about 2-3 hours, 116 persons). Unnecessary time with friends may lead towards forming harmful habits whereas the time for house related works is their duties to cooperate parents (Table 7).

**Table 7 Average time spent in other activities beside studies among Nepalese Students**

Responses	Below 1 hour	1-2 hour	2-3 hour	Above 3 hour
Watching Television	221	176	56	27
Listening audio music	303	107	43	27
Using the internet	282	121	37	40
Household related works	143	150	116	71



## DISCUSSION

Study environment has played an important role in study habits (Table-1). Effective study environment is an important foundation of study. About 50 percent Nepalese students like to study in silent and free of an interrupted room. For 36.25 percent Nepali students (Table-2) qualified teachers and effective teaching method are the major factors that determine the effective study habits. Also, Nepalese students (boys) want to develop effective study habits using their ability and making solid foundations. Students have to study in a place where they are not likely to be interrupted by friends, roommates, or relatives and other disturbances. They should know to select a conducive learning environment that has limited distractions. They must be familiar to have self-study unless they are working with a teacher participating in a discussion or study group that is completely thoughtful about the subject.<sup>3</sup>

There are various motivating factors for effective study habits. About 28.95 percent Nepalese students believe that aim and future vision is the key motivating factors for the effective study habits (Table-3). According to 36.04 percent Nepalese students the major problems they are facing in the school is unhygienic environment (Table-4). This problem is more prevalent in the government schools in comparison to the private schools of Nepal.

Repeated failure makes a person frustrated and makes negative towards self. About 36.87 percent Nepalese students believe that encouragement from the teachers and parents play an important role to proceed even repeated failure (Table-5). When students realize their weaknesses and seek the correction that will be more effective. About 39.58 percent Nepalese students are eagerly seeking to be counseled how they can improve their study habits. Also, they are poor in time management (Table-6).

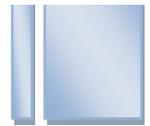
Most of the Nepalese students spend an average of daily two to three hours for the household related works. If they are able to utilize their time instead of other activities (television, internet and audio music) they can balance their time for the study. They should know how to invest their time according to the importance of the task (Table-7).

Study habits are the important ingredient for every student. Study habits differ from individual to individual because during learning, every individual display different behavior. According to Lyle, T. 1962,<sup>9</sup> "Psychologically study habits are automatically learned behavior pattern that enables the students to handle the specific type of situation easily. The student who has acquired good study habit has developed a behavior pattern which enables him to sit down and begin working on his assignments with the minimum of fuss and maximum of concentration." Study habits include many dimensions and skills like-comprehension, concentration, interaction, writing, drilling, task-orientation, sets, supports, and recording, etc.<sup>1</sup>

A student must make a better adjustment to achieve higher academic performance. Healthy students are well adjusted to their study environment. They can continue their studies without too much stress, strain, and conflict. They find educational life satisfying and pleasant most of the time. In reality, many pupils face many problems in their study that makes it hard to achieve a balanced adjustment.<sup>6</sup>

When students know proper study method, they will enjoy their educational life. When they find learning interesting, they will continue their education. They must be selective as they receive large quantities of information. Students must learn to make decisions, test alternatives, and reconstruct ideas to get good marks in the exams.<sup>10</sup>

Many students in Nepal said that they had the concentration problem and needed counseling in this issue. Concentration is a mental skill which can be developed with practice, much like building more muscles with daily exercise. Concentration involves



monitoring not only thoughts and emotions but also their environment. All of the best intentions to concentrate can be destroyed by distractions. Students have to use techniques to eliminate internal and external distractors.<sup>8</sup>

### CONCLUSION

The questionnaire assessed in this study proved to be a valid and reliable tool to measure the study habits of high school students. Since the questionnaires are easy to understand, and it can be completed by the participants in a short time, it can be used in determining the study habits of the high school students. Implementing the questionnaire would probably help the teacher, guardians, the school counselors and the researcher in this field will get insight and facts regarding study habits. This information could be implemented in developing effective study habits of the high schools.

### LIMITATION

There are limitations in this research, and the main one concerns the sample selection. The sample was based on convenience especially in the easy access areas of Nepal. The size of the sample was small due to the time and financial limitation.

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