

A Study of Learning Styles of Socially Disadvantaged Students of Punjab

Abstract

This study investigated learning styles of socially advantaged students in comparison to socially disadvantaged students of Punjabi in terms of magnitude of occurrence and mean differences.. The sample of study consists of 100 (Female=51, Male=39) socially advantaged Students, and 100 (Female=53, Male=37) socially disadvantaged students drawn randomly from 6 secondary schools of Punjab. The Learning style Questionnaire was used to identify students' learning styles. The t-test was applied after computing mean and SD of both groups of students. The results indicated that the magnitude of all the four learning styles was moderate and the ranking of both the groups in terms of mean performance varies (ii) there is no preferred learning style as mean performance of socially advantaged students varied from 58.00 to 61.82 and of disadvantaged students from 51.53 to 53.84 and (iii) socially advantaged students performed significantly better than socially disadvantaged students on all four learning styles namely, visual/verbal, visual/non-verbal, auditory and kinesthetic. These results are suggestive of the fact that socially disadvantage has adverse effect on learning styles of school students.

Keywords: Learning Style, Socially Advantaged Students, Socially Disadvantaged Students.

Introduction

Socially disadvantaged individuals are those who have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias because of their identity as a member of a group without regard to their individual qualities. The disadvantaged sections of society constitute that part of population which is denied the opportunity to fully explore and utilize its abilities and enjoy a quality of life. They are not handicapped by any genetic deficiency, but by the socio-economic circumstances of their lives related to their birth. The characteristics of the socially disadvantaged may be stated as economically deprived, inadequate and overcrowding housing, malnutrition, low parental and education and poor household management. In Indian society, the socially disadvantaged groups, based on single or multiple disadvantaged factors include scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, economically backward classes, minorities and, above all, gender and location based disadvantages.

In Indian society, the "Scheduled Castes" is the legal and constitutional name collectively given to the groups which have traditionally occupied the lowest status. This group was outside the caste system and inferior to all other castes. These groups are recognized by the Indian Constitution to be especially disadvantaged. They are discriminated against not only because of their sex but also because of religious, social and cultural structures which have given them the lowest position in the social hierarchy. Other Backward Class (OBC) is a collective term used by the Government of India to classify castes which are educationally and socially disadvantaged. It is one of several official classifications of the population of India, along with Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SCs and STs). There are many factors which are responsible for the children to put them in such a socially disadvantaged situation. One of the important factors that led to long- lasting social disadvantage for the child, in society, is that of poor education arising out of poverty.

With the openness of a student-centered learning environments, knowledge production is vital when providing students the opportunity to explore their own learning styles. In that respect, successful learning also occurs when learners are fully engaged in the active learning process. Student learning processes are greatly enhanced when they participate in deciding how they may demonstrate their competence in a body of

Sukhpreet Kaur
Research Scholar,
Deptt. of Education and
Community Service,
Punjabi University,
Patiala

knowledge or the performance of skills. Building a rapport with students is an essential strategy that educators could utilize in order to gauge growth in a student. Teaching and learning practices in higher education urgently need improvement-witness the recommendations of several national commissions on higher education and the difficulties faculty face with the diverse preparation of today's students. Learning style is a concept that can be important in educational environment, not only in improving teaching practices but also in bringing to the surface issues that help faculty and administrators think more deeply about their roles and the organizational culture in which they carry out their responsibilities. Brown (2000) viewed learning style as the manner in which individual perceive and process information in learning situations, especially at school stage.

Review of Literature

Battalio (2009) examined whether learning style and formats matter in the success of distance education of 120 students enrolled in nine sections of an under-graduate technical communication course. It found a number of statistically significant associations between students' learning styles, and nine measures evaluating both academic performance and student preference. Montemayor et al. (2009) studied the learning styles of high and low academic achieving freshman teacher education students of the University of the Cordilleras. There was no significant difference in the learning styles between low achieving and high achieving students. Since the students did not vary in terms of their learning style when compared according to level of academic performance. Abidin et al. (2011) studied the relationship between learning styles and overall academic achievement. A sample of study consisted of 317 students. The result revealed that a significant relationship between overall academic achievement and learning styles. It was also found that high, moderate of all achievers had a similar preference pattern of all learning styles and the learning styles framework did not change with subjects, it actually played an important role in academic performance across all the subjects. Neetu (2011) studied of socio-psychological correlates of learning thinking style and creativity of secondary school students, found that there was positive and significant relationship between socio-economic status and learning-thinking style; between personality and creativity of secondary school students. There were significant differences between learning-thinking style of secondary school students belonging to above and below average socio-economic status. There were also significant differences between the learning thinking style and creativity of boys and girls and of rural and urban secondary school students. Rezaee et al. (2011) investigated the relationship between learning styles and overall academic achievement and the data indicated a significant relationship between overall academic achievement and learning styles. It was also found that the high, moderate and low achievers had a similar preference pattern of learning in all learning styles. Moreover, the learning styles framework did not change with subjects, where it actually played an important role across all the

subjects. Seifcori and Zarei (2011) conducted a study to explore any probable relationship between the learning styles and the multiple intelligence types of Iranian English major sophomores at Islamic Azad University. The result revealed that kinesthetic learning style and spatial intelligence were the dominant among Iranian University students. The correlation analysis revealed significant relations of tactile learning style with mathematical intelligence and bodily intelligence, and between kinesthetic learning style and bodily intelligence.

Khurshid (2012) studied learning styles of the students of natural sciences, social sciences and humanities at graduate level. The preferred Learning styles of natural sciences students were tactile auditory and kinesthetic, whereas students of social sciences preferred visual and group learning styles. Students of humanities preferred auditory and individual learning styles. Vaishnav (2013) studied the learning style and academic achievement. It was formed that kinesthetic learning style to be more prevalent than visual and auditory and kinesthetic learning styles among secondary school students. There was a positive and high correlation between kinesthetic learning style and academic achievement. Fangetod (2017) studied on a quantitative investigation of learning styles, motivation and learning strategies among a representative group of undergraduate engineering students at University Technology Malaysia. The result indicated that most of the students have a preference for more than one learning style and the surveyed students had balanced preferences. For all learning style dimensions, except for visual learning they had better motivation than learning strategies. Bosman and Schulze (2018) explored the inter-relationships of mathematics achievement and seven learning styles, as well as the learning styles of high and low achievers. The results revealed that the individual learning style correlated the highest with mathematics performance. Through follow-up interviews with 10 high achievers, the study also found that context influenced learning style preferences: in addition to individual learning at home, high performers preferred reading/writing and group learning in the classroom. The study recommended that teachers should create a positive learning environment at school, and use teaching methods that accommodate a variety of learning styles.

These studies show the magnitude of occurrence of different learning styles varies across subjects and population and has shown a good relationship with academic achievement which varies across social disadvantaged.

Objectives of Study

To study learning styles among socially advantaged and socially disadvantaged students of Punjab.

Hypothesis

There will be no significant gender differences in learning styles of socially advantaged and socially disadvantaged secondary school students.

Method

Descriptive method of research was followed in the conduct of study.

Sample

The study sample consisted of (100) male and female socially advantaged and socially disadvantaged students selected randomly from 6 secondary schools of Punjab. It was distributed into two groups; the group of socially advantaged students

(Female=51, Male=39) and socially disadvantaged students (Female=53, Male=37). The students have been selected by simple random method from the selected government schools affiliated with Punjab School Education Board.

Results and Discussion

The mean performance of socially advantaged and disadvantaged secondary school students on four learning style is shown in table 1.

Table 1
Learning Styles among Socially Advantaged and Socially Disadvantage Student

S. No.	Learning Styles	Group				Level
		Socially Advantaged		Socially Disadvantaged		
		M	Rank	M	Rank	
1.	Auditory	59.93	III	53.66	II	Moderate
2.	Kinesthetic	60.26	II	52.84	III	Moderate
3.	Visual/ Verbal	58.00	IV	53.83	I	Moderate
4.	Visual/ Non-verbal	61.82	I	51.54	IV	Moderate

Range 58.00-61.82 for socially advantaged and 51.54-53.83 for socially disadvantaged.

The visual nonverbal, visual verbal, auditory learning style and Kinesthetic Learning styles for socially advantaged students are higher than that of socially disadvantaged students. The magnitude of mean performance across four learning styles shows almost similar values and the ranking or preferred styles show variance for both advantaged and disadvantaged groups of school students.

This result indicates that socially advantaged students prefers to use visual non verbal and

kinesthetic learning styles more than other styles. While the most preferred learning style for socially disadvantaged students was Visual/Verbal learning style followed by auditory learning style.

The t-test was applied to find out significance of mean difference on all the four learning styles between socially advantaged and disadvantaged groups of school students.

Table 2
The t-test Results Testing the Significance of Learning Styles of Socially Advantaged and Disadvantaged Students

S. No.	Learning Style		Socially Advantaged (100)	Socially Disadvantaged (100)	t-value
1.	Kinesthetic	M	61.82	60.26	3.81**
		SD	10.18	9.52	
2.	Visual/Non-verbal	M	58.00	59.93	3.54**
		SD	10.03	10.17	
3.	Visual/ Verbal	M	53.66	53.83	3.17**
		SD	18.29	18.63	
4.	Auditory	M	51.54	52.84	2.97**
		SD	19.54	17.09	

** Significant at 0.01 level.

The table 2 show that the t-test results have shown significant differences at level beta ($p \leq 0.01$) in all learning styles between socially advantaged and socially disadvantaged where the values of (t) = (3.81, 3.54, 3.17, 2.97) for the learning styles (kinesthetic, visual non-verbal, visual-verbal, auditory) respectively. It can be observed that the difference is in favor of socially advantaged students. This means that socially advantaged students have significantly higher performance than socially disadvantaged students on all the four learning styles. However, the preferences show minor variations as mentioned earlier. These results suggest that social disadvantage has an adverse effect on learning style of students.

Conclusion and Implications

The magnitude of learning styles does not reflect on preferred learning styles of school students,

may be socially advantaged or disadvantaged. Moreover, social disadvantaged shows adverse effect on all learning styles of school students. It turns out that there are different and diverse individual learning styles of school students, whether socially advantaged or disadvantaged and must take into account these differences when preparing the curriculum. The development of the teachers' capacity to use teaching styles appropriate for the school students diversity of learning styles to improve academic achievement is the need of the hour. It is a matter of propriety for educationists to improve learning outcome of school student, and hence such an approach will be more appropriate in the wake of call of universalization of school education.

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