

# Low Academic Achievement: Causes and Results

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**Abstract**—This research aimed to identify the causes and results of low academic achievement from teachers, parents and students perspective as well as providing possible solutions to this problem. With reference to the researchers' experiences as teachers at schools and later at universities and after seeing the academic results of students on various courses, they found that there are weaknesses in the students' academic achievement. In fact, academic achievement is considered very necessary for students to transfer from one studying level to another, so the researchers found that it is crucial to investigate this topic. In fact, this research presents some factors that affecting students' low academic achievement for instance, using traditional methods instead of using modern teaching methods in teaching, as well as the poor relationships between the teachers and the students that create a teaching environment lacking of respect which leads to the lack of students' acceptance of the learning process on the whole. Finally, the researchers proposed some solutions for dealing with low academic achievement such as, looking for the real reasons for failure, developing clear plans and rules to achieve success and not to ignore the learner's potentials. The researchers recommended that the parents should be aware of their children's problems and pursue their academic achievement step by step, increasing interest in the physical, mental and health of the student, providing a relaxing school environment and using attractive techniques and educational activities to motivate students for leaning.

**Index Terms**—Academic achievement, failure, success, exam's anxiety, learning difficulties

## I. INTRODUCTION

To experience the real excitement of success, one must experience bitterness of failure for once, and from our errors we can learn more than learning from our success, and this does not mean that human deliberately fail to succeed, no one accepts that. On the contrary, we should look at failed experiences positively after going through them, to draw the required experiences for success then to invest failure in order to succeed and changing it from a painful memory to a situation providing us with the benefits and experiences throughout our lives. Human beings are eager to success and achievement in their scientific and practical lives at all levels, but lasting success cannot be achieved constantly because human rely on trying in their lives, and the consequences of this attempt is failing sometimes. Failure does not mean giving up as long as it would not be the last objective in a person's life, but it becomes a motivation for success and a ladder to climb and moving towards the best to achieve the goals and objectives. In fact, failure is always associated with frustration and fear because of its relation to punishment from others which takes a form of disrespect, rebuke and punishment either physical or moral like, beatings and neglecting. Though, the fear of failure, committing mistakes, permanent feeling of guilt and not trying to succeed are the failure itself.

## II. RESEARCH PROBLEM

The problem of low academic achievement of students in the examinations is one of the most challenging problems that faces students as well as teachers. This problem has many causes and it has educational, social, cultural and psychological dimensions. However, the students' low academic achievement on the exam can be defined as: Low or weakness of the student's mark under the normal average in a study subject level as a result of a variety of reasons, including those related to the student himself, or those related to family, social and academic environment. Consequently, this may lead to frequent repetition of failure, despite their abilities that qualify them to get the best marks.

Individual differences play an important role in academic achievement of students. There have been many attempts to address the problem of low academic achievement and some factors have been identified in explaining academic achievement. Among the numerous variables researched, demographic status, intelligence, behavioral characteristics and psychological factors, namely, attitudes, self esteem, self efficacy and self concept, have been used to explain academic achievement. Besides differences in ability, which are not easy to control, students have specific learning styles that may influence their academic achievement. Sternberg (1997) proposed that learning styles are at least in part socialized, suggesting that they can, to some extent, be modified. Thus, being aware of learning styles and their roles in academic achievement is of a great importance for educational psychologists, teachers and researchers.

This research focuses on addressing the real causes of this weakness and attempt to understand and analyze these causes to find suitable solutions to reduce the phenomenon of weakness of students' achievement on exams.

### III. RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

Generally, failure has many disadvantages in various fields, since learning and teaching are the very important and considered a necessity for life at the present time. The problem of low achievement at examinations is a big problem causing a lot of negative and dangerous effects on the family and the community together. As for the family that facing this problem, its individuals are suffering from instability and the emergence of cases of violence and escaping from the house and other things that sometimes destroy the family which will reflect negatively on the community as a whole. Accordingly, this can lead to imbalance and inharmonic among the community members. Because of the distraction of the social structure where it causes the irregularity in the tasks performed by its members, the emergence of social classes, and a failed and unsuccessful class in its life considered as a burden on community that lead to wide gaps among the members of the community.

The problem of low academic achievement is one of the biggest problems that facing the modern educational institutions, which hindered them from the implementation of their educational mission appropriately. Still, this problem may lead to the presence of a group of students who are unable to pursue their courses with their colleagues because of their weak potentials, becoming a source of annoyance, chaos and inconvenience to the teacher and the rest of the students and this in turn leads to disruption of the educational process in the classroom and in the whole school.

Though, many parents complain of low academic achievement experienced by their children, unaware of the real reasons behind this weakness and ways to solve it. Some parents might use non educational and useless methods such as physical punishment to urge their children to be hardworking in their studying. Unfortunately, these coercive methods cannot lead to improved conditions of their children, on the contrary, they can provide undesirable consequences.

### IV. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research attempts to discuss the following topics in details:

- Definition of academic failure.
- Causes of academic failure and its aspects.
- Suggested solutions for academic failure.
- The way to success.

### V. DEFINITION OF ACADEMIC FAILURE

The concept of academic failure can be defined as a stop of attempting because of the fear of committing errors, however, trying to achieve a goal can be considered a success even if it was less than expected. Aremu (2003) identifies poor academic performance as a performance that is adjudged by the examiner and some other significant as falling below an expected standard. He also stresses that academic failure is not only frustrating to the pupils and the parents, its effects are equally crucial on the society in terms of lack of manpower in all fields of the economy and politics.

This provides the learner with experience he/ she learns to find what is suitable and fit in his/ her life, and this is the same as what people protested when Edison - the inventor of the light bulb -They knew that he failed hundred times to achieve his goal to invent the light bulb. They asked: "Why are you keeping on trying all of these attempts?" He replied: "It is enough for me to dedicate this number of unsuccessful attempts to people to try other methods!" Edison, of course, believes in the saying, "Practice makes perfect." So he was seen as a target of the subject that cannot prevent him from success and finally he achieved his goals.

If we want to know what is failure, we first have to know what success means because they are contradictory and their definitions present inverse images from one to other. Failure is the opposite to success, success is in our daily lives and we live it every day, as success achievement, failure is considered underachievement and we cannot measure the standards of success and failure although success is like smoke shines in the darkness.

Basically, success has a traditional interpretation which is considered a means to satisfy a specific need or desire to achieve the indicated goal, and if it is not achieved the result will be the failure. Hence, success is the result of the equation: achievement with hard work equals success, but failure is the result of our shortcoming and blaming the luck and the circumstances so as to cover our defaults and lack of loyalty to the success achieved.

### VI. THE CAUSES OF ACADEMIC FAILURE AND ITS FEATURES

There are many reasons for the academic failure:

#### 1) Lack of a Clear Plan:

Success does not happen suddenly or by chance, however, if it happened by chance to some people, it would be an exception. Basically, before starting any work, there should be developed plans like plans for success and plans to achieve the indicated goals in a given period, and what is the best strategy that will be followed to implement these

plans. Actually, planning is not a difficult task; it just needs time and commitment. Someone says, "I do not want to put plan for a task because I might change my mind at any stage of implementation it". This could be ridiculous because you can change and develop your plan at any time because the basic principle of any plan that it should be adjustable and elastic at any stage in its implementation. Whether the goal is big or a small but without a plan you will not reach a complete success of the task. Thus, ideas will remain ideas and unimplemented if the map of the work (the plan) does not exist. Some people tend to do the same work without a plan so they always get the negative results. But with a flexible plan, they can develop their ideas to guarantee their success and be away from failure.

### **2) Medical and Psychological Reasons:**

With reference to academic failure there are many causes related to medical and psychological reasons such as:

a. Major Depression Disorder: It is common that depression as a disease caused by failing in exams but it is more frequent that depression often precedes the exams' period. Depression can cause inability and weakness in concentration of the patient. The result of the equation becomes inverted, any depression can lead to failure.

b. Generalized anxiety disorder that can cause a situation of forgetting and weakness in concentration.

c. Exam Phobia: It is a case of a severe fear of the exam and the expectation of failure, which weakens the educational achievement and preparation and is accompanied with less attentive and not fully prepared for the exam.

d. Obsessive Compulsive Disorder: It is the frequent predominant ideas in mind of the students that prevent them from thinking of anything else. However, they can't overcome them and cause severe distress and affect their academic performance.

e. Attention Disorder: It is the lack of the ability to focus attention on one thing for a suitable time. It may be associated with hyperactivity disorder.

f. Learning Disabilities and Slow Learning: It is a functional deficit in the brain leading to a lack of capacity to acquire new knowledge, as cases in low IQ or difficulty in reading (Dyslexia) or difficulty in writing (Dysgraphia) or difficulty in mathematics (Dyscalculia) and they are investigated by special psychological measurements.

### **3) Reasons Related to the Learner:**

The weakness of enthusiasm, lack of experience and hasty in getting the results are considered causes that often lead to academic failure, along with lack of abilities, fear of failure and lack of self-confidence. Therefore, academic failure occurs when someone convinces himself/herself that he/she is unable to succeed because of the weakness of his/her abilities and lack of experience. The goals should also be clear, specific and realistic to the learner. Failure to do so will result in missing these goals.

### **4) Parental and Educational Reasons:**

The excess pressure on the student in order to get higher marks in the exams may create a feeling of fear if he is unable to get high marks as required by parents, and this frequently leading to the academic failure. Moreover, the unstable families situations make students live in a state of tension, confusion and lack of concentrating during the exam which will reflect negatively the on academic performance.

### **5) Exam's Anxiety:**

It is a state of feeling or an emotional condition that student faces during the exam, and arise from the fear of failing in the exam or the fear of not getting satisfactory result for himself and for others. However, this emotional state may affect mental processes such as paying attention, concentrating, thinking and remembering, as a result of the fact that any examination or test may decide the fate of its taker and it will affect a particular aspect of his life, such as success in the study, admission to a particular job and others, causing him fear and not achieving the requested level.

### **6) Lack of Motivation for Success:**

Although most of people may fail at some point or at some stages in their lives, they have to consider failure is one chain for success and to learn from failure and know how to deal with it. Still, if anyone was able to know why he /she failed; definitely this would lead to success. Thus, anyone who suffers from failure he will also enjoy the sweetness of success, and learn from his mistakes and saying "Good bye to failure." To sum up, these factors attributed to teachers, students, parents and the school environment were primarily responsible for the low academic performance of the students. It must be emphasized that these factors generally do not operate in isolation. Teacher absenteeism and lateness for example would result in incompleteness of the syllabus and would also affect student's motivation, enthusiasm, zeal and commitment to learn.

## **VII. PREVIOUS STUDIES**

1. Masten and Coatsworth (1998), indicated that success in school demands three clusters of skills; cognitive and meta cognitive skills, social skills and self-management skills. The cognitive and meta cognitive skills include skills related to goal setting, progress monitoring, and memory skills, whereas social skills refer to interpersonal skills, social problem solving, listening, and teamwork skills. In addition, the self-management skills such as managing attention, motivation, and anger are also essential in ensuring success. These three skill sets were the most powerful predictors of long-term school success and seemed to separate high achievers from low achievers.

2. Nile (2006) pointed out that there is a weakness among the students of the main stages in language skills, and confirms the reality of this weakness of students in key stages of the delay in the mastery of reading and writing skills, as well as weaknesses in the skills of writing the alphabet and calligraphy.

3. Naimi (2010) carried out a study about the poor academic achievement at the United Arab Emirates schools. The results showed that the percentage of students in academic achievement is weak; ranged from 15 to 30%. Thus, this can be attributed to the educational and economical levels of the students at these areas.

4. Barakat & Harz Allah (2010) study addressed the reasons for the low level of academic achievement in mathematics at Tulkarem schools and these reasons are:

- a. Health problems affect student achievement in Math
- b. Behavioral problems affect the achievement of students in mathematics performance.
- c. Lack of self desire to study may lead to students' low academic achievement in mathematics level.
- d. Lack of a sense of belonging to the school can cause a sense of unconcerned to the study.
- e. Teachers' lack the required knowledge of modern educational and psychological theories can lead to students' poor academic performance.

The study recommended to give more attention to students' health so that they can focus on their studying and to provide a relaxing school environment in order to increase the motivation of students and increase the level of belonging to the school. As well as, that the teachers have to use attractive techniques and educational activities to motivate students for learning. Moreover, parents should be responsive to their children's problems and pursue their academic achievement step by step. Also it is necessary to arrange training courses and workshops for teachers, who are teaching mathematics, especially those teachers who teach mathematics from different subjects, to develop their skills in teaching mathematics.

5. Tamimi (2012) conducted a study about weakness in students' academic performance. In this study, he pointed out this problem has become a global problem. He found that the number of pupils at Al Salmiat Primary School suffer from this problem; therefore he searched for solutions to this problem. The researcher also explained the factors that lead to poor academic achievement, such as social factors, economic factors and political conditions. The study recommended staying away from violence and inappropriate words with students who suffer from academic weakness and encourage these students by offering them some gifts and paying them more attention.

6. Ahmed & Wias (2012) did a study to examine the reasons for the low level of academic achievement among high school students from teachers and students perspective; the study showed these reasons, including the large number of distractions around the student like the spread of mobile phone, means fun, low motivation of students towards learning and the weakness of the attention of parents to follow up the level of their children. The study recommended minimizing the distractions of attention, to concentrate on motivation, to strengthen the work of students in science subjects by giving them more courses and to provide them with modern teaching methods that are in line with the tremendous scientific advances.

7. Eldridge (2012) study concentrated on the reasons for educational failure and the pedagogical support techniques to face this phenomenon. The study showed that there are six key elements in the definition of academic failure these are: **First**, schools' Exams. It is known that the school years in all levels of education, either end with final exams, or divide a year into several semesters, each of which ends with a periodic exam (quarterly), and sometimes applying the two methods for evaluating students together. However, the educational system usually ends with General Education Examinations (standardized tests) covering all formal and informal educational institutions in all regions. **Second**, failure. It means not achieving the required mark in that exam. That failure may be partially or completely without affecting the student's average, which usually indicated whether the student has succeeded or not. According to the planned programs, teachers should respect the quality of education and its objectives, fitting to the age of the students and their abilities in general. **Third**, psychological feelings. The repetition of academic failure may be accompanied with psychological feelings as well as negative social attitudes. The feelings of sadness and anxiety that accompany the student failure make failure as psychosocial special case. Then, failure is often followed by social situations like sarcastic or moral punishment that may be followed by physical punishment and ignoring for the careless student. Accordingly, the consequences of academic failure have bad effects on both psychological and social aspects. **Fourth**, academic failure and learning difficulties. The distinction should be made between academic failure and learning difficulties. Basically, the learning difficulties are a temporary situation that almost happened to most of the normal students. Therefore, learning difficulties can be categorized into three levels: simple, medium and strong according to the educational support, or what it calls therapeutic program that is dealing with members of this class, according to their level of difficulty. This study recommended the need to focus attention on the educational support activities by adopting the modern means and techniques, using the most appropriate educational procedure that are common within the scope of deepening the understanding and skills development. However, the reinforcement of students' achievement among groups at all levels of education enable them to realize the weak points, highlight their true potential, reduce the gap between them and face the difficulties and obstacles to solve them. Finally, attention should be paid much to the diagnosis because it is essential scientific practice that will set the reasons of academic failure and its quality.

8. Almuammria (2015) performed a study about the impact of the environment in enhancing the academic achievement of the students. The researcher tried to focus on the secondary level because it is in the middle of studying years and consider the age of adolescence, associated with behaviors that some teachers may overlook; consequently, this requires the presence of a specialist or social worker. The researcher showed that there are a range of factors

affecting academic achievement such as: learner factors, family factors and school factors. The study recommended the need for direct contact between the parents and the school and the participation of parents in providing feedback and support for the school. On the other hand, the role of the school is to inform the parents about their children's behavior within the school as well as the participation of parents of students in religious, national and cultural events. The study also recommended the need to consider the family and the school as one unit that is a complement for each other and this integration and cooperation help to achieve the educational and the scientific goals.

#### VIII. ACADEMIC FAILURE SOLUTIONS

This section proposed solutions for dealing with academic failure. The following are some of these:

1. Try to find out how to set goals, plan well and manage time wisely. Nowadays, these are greatly available through specialized books, the Internet and television programs. Moreover, the learner can make use of the holiday before the exams to do so.
2. Before starting to study, there must be a developed and a clear plan because success does not happen suddenly or by chance. As a result, planning is necessary for success and does not need much time but it needs accuracy. Besides, the plan should be flexible and easy so the learner can modify it any time.
3. Look for the real reason for failure in studying and try to take advantage of it to develop clear rules to achieve success in the coming times.
4. Provide the basic needs to the student by paying attention to diet through the provision of food that contains nutrients that provide student with the required energy.
5. Make sure to take appropriate periods of comfort to be active because memory needs incentives to continue studying with enthusiasm and desire.
6. Choose good friends or good role models that help in preventing the student from frequent absences.
7. Do not ignore your potentials after failure but start to identify the reasons of failing and do not blame yourself for not preparing well for the exams since self-blame is sometimes more rational than blaming the teachers or the difficulty of the exams' questions.
8. Make sure to sleep early at the night of the exam, to preserve the purity of mind and the power of memory so as to be able to focus also it is useful to have a simple review before the exams.
9. Get rid of distractions while learning- There are many distractions for students such distractions include TV, computer, music, video games, and peers. By eliminating these distractions students can learn quicker and more efficiently.
10. Provide an appropriate learning environment through providing the means for heating in winter and cooling in summer and stay away as possible from the noise, as well as the need to use the teacher of the of modern teaching methods to raise the motivation and interest in the learning process.

#### IX. WAYS TO SUCCESS

It should be remembered that the one who does not seek success, does not have an ambition, thus it is the ambition that is the endless treasure. However, it should be emphasized that success needs hardworking, sacrifice and patience... Therefore, learners should work hard and do their best to achieve success, ambitions and fulfilling their goals. There is a well known saying that summarizes this fact, "As you plant you will reap". Then learners should believe in their potentials to achieve their goals, not only in the academic field but also in all life fields. Successful learners have great skills and abilities as well as having a strong need to remove the negligence and laziness from themselves. Consequently, they are better, talented, stronger, smarter than one can think. They should remove all the negative words about themselves, such as: I cannot -I'm not smart on the other hand they should constantly repeat these expressions: I deserve the best, I'm creative, I'm Excellent and I have the abilities to be successful in all life aspects. Good learners have to think and love success then start their journey towards accomplishment of their goals and remember that success starts in the psychological state of the individual.

Successful people do not achieve success while they are sitting and wasting their times in useless things waiting for success, they do not think that the chance of luck, but that they have to work seriously, to take advantage of opportunities and to rely on what they are achieving. Failure is just an incidental experience in people's lives to take lessons from it that will lead to success. In fact, it should be recognized that no one can succeed without learning from his mistakes and the one who doesn't fail doesn't work. Successful people are not afraid of failure because failure provides them with opportunities and experiences. Furthermore, do not leave failure causing temporary frustration and defeat but to create chances for permanent success. Actually, successful people always have confidence in their abilities to succeed and anyone who does not have self-confidence begins the battle of failure and defeat.

#### X. RESEARCH RESULTS

With reference to the above mentioned, it should be stated out that the problem of poor academic achievement is one of the most important problems that hinder the work of the modern schools and prevent them from fulfilling their goals and mission in appropriate way. However, anyone who practices teaching admits that poor academic achievement exists

in almost every classroom, where there is a group of students who are unable to keep in pace with the rest of their colleagues in achievement and comprehending the curriculum and often this group is turned into a source of trouble and inconvenience, which may cause disruption in the educational process in the classroom or disorder within the school.

In general, when talking about the problem of poor academic achievement and weak scientific level, it may come to mind, that this problem is confined to a particular country. One of the attributes of the educational system outputs in the Arab countries is poor academic achievement, and so this problem is a major problem that most of the educational systems in the Arab countries suffered from as it stated in the statistical report of the UNICEF, where it pointed out that the number of failed students in their classes is about (1,036,110) in ten Arab countries in 1995. Actually, it is not a secret that this result can indicate a waste of human energies and resources, also point out that after students fail in their classes, they do not achieve a good academic level.

Jazmawi (2008) suggested that the problem of poor academic achievement is a global problem that any community is hardly devoid of it, that twenty students of every hundred have weakness in the academic achievement, he make sure of this ratio by taking random samples from different communities.

## XI. RECOMMENDATIONS

This research yielded the following major recommendations:

1. To increase interest in the physical, mental and health of the student so that he can concentrate on his learning.
2. To provide a relaxing school environment in order to increase the motivation of students and increase the level of belonging to the school and community.
3. To use attractive techniques and educational activities by the teachers to motivate students for leaning.
4. To train teachers on the application and implementation of educational skills to work and continuously follow-up performance processes of the students.
5. To organize training courses and workshops for teachers who are teaching different subjects to develop their teaching skills.
6. To coordinate between higher educational leadership, whether in the Ministry of Education or universities, to develop the learning process in a way to keep pace with changes and new developments in the field of education all over the world.
7. The parents should be aware of their children's problems and pursue their academic achievement step by step.
8. To take advantages of previous international experiences in all the countries, that success is proven largely on the economic, educational and social growth.

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