

## Öđrenci alıřma Becerilerinin Bařarı Üzerine Etkisi

### The Effect of Study Skills on Academic Success

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#### Öz

Bu arařtırma, sađlık yüksekokulu 1. sınıf öđrencilerinin ders alıřma becerilerini deđerlendirmek ve alıřma davranıřları ile bařarıları arasındaki iliřkiyi belirlemek amacıyla yapılmıřtır.

Ankara Üniversitesi Cebeci Sađlık Yüksekokulu hemřirelik (n=61) ve ebelik (n=63) bölümlerinde öđrenim gören 114 öđrenciye 80 soru ve 11 alt bölümden oluřan Ders alıřma ve Öđrenme Etkinliklerini Deđerlendirme Testi, dönem bařında ve sonunda uygulanmıřtır. Alt testlerin ön ve sontest puanlarının karřılařtırılmasında t-testi; alt testler ile öđrenci bařarısını belirlemek için de korelasyon katsayısı hesaplanmıřtır.

Öntest uygulamasında elde edilen sonuçlara göre, öđrencilere alıřma becerilerine iliřkin bilgi ve beceriler kazandırılmaya alıřılmıřtır. Testin ön ve son uygulama puanları arasında anlamlı bir fark bulunmuřtur. Sontest ile bařarı durumları arasında görölen anlamlı iliřki öđrencilerin dönem sonunda etkili alıřma yollarını öđrendiklerini göstermiřtir.

*Anahtar Sözcükler:* alıřma becerisi, öđrenme, eđitim, bařarı

#### Abstract

This study was designed to evaluate the study skills of first grade students in the School of Health and to determine the relationship between their study behaviour and academic success.

114 students (61 nursing students, 63 midwifery students) in Ankara University Cebeci School of Health received the Test to Evaluate Student Study and Learning Activities, which was composed of 11 sub categories. The test consisted of 80 questions and was administered at the beginning and the end of the term. T-test was used to compare the scores of pre and post subtests while the coefficient of correlation was determined to show the success of the students in subtests.

Depending on the results obtained from pre test, it was aimed to improve students' knowledge of and skills in studying. There was a significant difference between the scores of pre and post tests. The significant relationship between the scores of post test and the student success revealed that they learned how to study effectively.

*Key words:* Study skills, learning, education, success

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## Introduction

Education starts with an aim and continues with teaching-learning process, which includes being prepared to learn, guiding the student, participation, motivation, reinforcement and the information on results (feedback). Learning is acquired by the person who learns through teaching in a selected controlled environment. Learning in the education process takes place through teaching procedure (Fidan, 1986). In a teaching procedure, it is important for the student to learn with some effective study habits.

Learning is described as a change in behavior that can be observed and measured (Özkalp et al., 1991). Learning occurs at each moment of our lives as long as we interact with the environment. Learning is a constant change which occurs in time (Ünlü, 1995). In order to learn, one must first intend to learn and study. If the person does not have that intention, s/he can not take the responsibility of learning. The person who starts the learning process with an intention and determination understands the relationship between the subject he learns and similar subjects, conceives its importance in the whole, connects them with previous information and determines the technique suitable for himself (Yalçın, 1994). In accordance with the targets determined, an education process in which the student participates is important. Participation is the effort of a student to learn by interacting with the educational components (Fidan, 1986).

Students vary in terms of organizing information, problem solving and learning methods. In order to be successful at school, the study skills and learning strategies must be used properly. Study skill can be defined as an effective use of certain techniques with the aim of learning. All kinds of study skills such as reading, writing, taking notes, listening, getting prepared for examinations are important means of success at school (Yıldırım et al., 2000).

The student plays an active role in his learning process. If the teacher arranges a learning environment but the student does not use effective listening and note taking skills, and does not take the rules of getting prepared for exams into consideration, learning can not be realized. Students support themselves and manage their motivation. The motivation of students may be increased in a teaching process that considers the positive effect of academic self images on teaching. Therefore, offering a teaching process in a way consistent with their characteristics exerts positive effects on their behavior. Studies on motivation for success have revealed that the students who have a higher desire for success do their assignments better. In order to be successful, student behavior must be formed spontaneously.

Students who think that success depends on their efforts learn better than those who believe that success relies on teachers and other factors. They always come to classes prepared and use their study skills effectively. The effect of motivation, which is one of the most important determinants of the direction, strength and decisiveness of student behavior at school, are observed in many positive and negative behaviors that emerge in teaching-learning environment (Fidan, 1986). Student who is eager to study realizes the importance of this issue in success. According to the findings of various studies, students spent less effort when they felt they were unsuccessful and thus, they experienced more difficulties in learning (Glover and Corkill, 1987; Yalçın, 1994). These results show that high motivation for success is the basic condition and prerequisite of learning.

Teacher helps learners to establish a link between their previous knowledge and the new information they will obtain during learning experience. Questions are asked and examples are provided towards this purpose. If new information is obtained in relation to the previous experience, it will be more effective and such learning will be more permanent (Wella, 2002). The teacher's appropriate use of reinforcers helps the learners to maintain effective behavior.

Students want to be informed about the appropriacy of their behavior. They feel satisfied and motivated when they were confirmed that what they already know is right. Their mind focuses on the subjects they believe to be important while they are interacting with their learning environment. Listening is a skill and an active process in which one should spend some effort required to perceive, understand and evaluate what is told (Wolvin and Coakley, 1979).

Studies have shown that one of the most important reasons for failure is the insufficient listening skill (Conaway, 1982). Listening is one of the most effective study skills that has to be developed by the students (Semones and Brace, 1991). The student who employs the skills of active reading, listening and note taking knows how to reach information and uses writing skills efficiently. He displays his knowledge and skills through class participation, homework and examinations. The success of students in examinations depends on whether they know some principles and processes about getting prepared for the exams and taking the exams as well as how much they know about the subject.

The utilization of appropriate techniques such as educational drama that improves communication skills through role playing, increases interest, motivation and active participation. As for students, perceptions, expectations, self confidence, self image, interests, learning strategies, attitudes and habits, and relevant previous knowledge and skills play an important role in learning and the maintenance of motivation. Collaboration of the students during education process is important for active participation and success (Pratt, 2003).

The students who assume their responsibility for learning process, and take the necessary measures accordingly, use their time efficiently through planning, implement the skills of active reading, listening, note taking, writing, adopt a participatory role in learning environment, motivate themselves for examinations and take necessary measures to protect their health become successful.

The students who consider what they have learned as significant and valuable and think that the knowledge and skills will play an important role in future success spend more effort. As a result of the efforts they have spent, their studying and learning become more effective. Regarding studying as a satisfactory activity, seeing every activity related to lessons as a job to be achieved or a problem to be solved and using study skills are all important for success. When the students realize the benefits of each skill for themselves, they participate in the activities to develop those skills further (Yıldırım et al., 2000).

This study was designed to analyze study skills separately and to evaluate activities for studying and to help students grasp the relationship between these methods and school success.

## Method

### *Population and Sample*

The population of this study is comprised of the students of Ankara University Cebeci School of Health and the sample includes 114 first year students, 61 nursing and 63 midwifery students.

The study protocol was approved by the school administration and the permission was obtained. The students were informed about the purpose and content of the study; they were told that their participation was voluntary and their verbal consent was obtained.

*Data Collection and Evaluation*

Data were collected by applying an evaluation test for studying and learning activities (Yıldırım et al., 2000 ) and also by examining student grades. The test includes 80 questions about 11 sub topics covering Learning, Planned study, Effective Reading, Listening, Class Participation, Writing, Using Library, Getting prepared for and Taking Exams, Motivation, Note Taking, Health and Nutrition. The “t-test” was used in order to determine whether there was a difference between test scores in preliminary and final applications of the items involved. A correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between pre and post test scores in each item and also between these scores and student success.

*Reliability and Validity*

The validity and reliability of the test was determined by considering the Cronbach alpha coefficients for each and all of the items. SPSS for windows was used for this purpose. Alpha value was found to be 0.92. This coefficient was determined for each of the items and these coefficients are illustrated in Table I.

Table 1.  
*Cronbach Values for Each of the Items*

Items (N=114)	$\alpha$
Learning	0.76
Planned study	0.82
Active reading	0.75
Listening	0.72
Class participation	0.79
Writing	0.85
Using the Library	0.85
Getting Prepared for and Taking the Exam	0.81
Motivation	0.69
Note taking	0.80
Health and Nutrition	0.75

## Results

The test was given to the first grade students at the beginning and the end of the academic year. Findings related to all items are demonstrated in Table 2.

Table 2.  
*The Difference Between the Pre and Post-Test*

Items (N=114)	$\bar{X}$	S	t-test	p	r
Learning					
Pre-test	24.84	3.88	-4.78	0.000	0.56
Post-test	26.42	3.64			
Planned study					
Pre-test	38.31	7.57	-2.83	0.006	0.68
Post-test	39.84	6.84			
Active reading					
Pre-test	28.23	3.97	-5.26	0.000	0.63
Post-test	29.94	4.08			
Listening					
Pre-test	22.13	3.58	-4.27	0.000	0.57
Post-test	23.51	3.83			
Class participation					
Pre-test	22.24	4.87	-4.31	0.000	0.71
Post-test	23.76	4.98			
Writing					
Pre-test	23.27	4.12	-3.81	0.000	0.66
Post-test	24.45	3.81			
Using the Library					
Pre-test	21.16	6.47	-3.78	0.000	0.66
Post-test	23.00	5.99			
Getting Prepared for and Taking the Exam					
Pre-test	36.19	4.88	-5.35	0.000	0.68
Post-test	38.06	4.44			
Motivation					
Pre-test	22.25	3.41	-6.76	0.000	0.66
Post-test	23.98	3.16			
Note taking					
Pre-test	45.38	7.30	-2.62	0.010	0.64
Post-test	46.96	7.77			
Health and Nutrition					
Pre-test	17.30	2.80	-8.09	0.000	0.58
Post-test	19.38	3.14			

114 students who participated in the study had higher mean scores in post-tests and the difference between pre and post test mean scores was statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). A positive relationship was observed between the scores of pre and post tests on sub topics.

The relationship between the pre and post-test and grades of the students was examined by correlation analysis. The findings are given in Table 3.

Table 3.  
*Correlation Between Items and Grades*

Items (N=114)	Grade r
Learning	
Pre-test	-0.096
Post-test	0.002
Planned study	
Pre-test	-0.042
Post-test	0.011
Active reading	
Pre-test	-0.024
Post-test	0.089
Listening	
Pre-test	0.019
Post-test	0.048
Class participation	
Pre-test	-0.052
Post-test	-0.019
Writing	
Pre-test	-0.025
Post-test	-0.009
Using the Library	
Pre-test	-0.123
Post-test	-0.103
Getting Prepared for and Taking the Exam	
Pre-test	-0.074
Post-test	-0.013
Motivation	
Pre-test	0,049
Post-test	0,098
Note taking	
Pre-test	0.029
Post-test	0.045
Health and Nutrition	
Pre-test	0,008
Post-test	0,400

According to these results, a positive correlation was found between the scores of post-test on the items of learning, planned study, active reading and grades while there was weak negative correlation between the scores of pre-tests on the items of learning, planned study, active reading and grades at the significant level of 0.05.

While the correlation between pre-tests scores in the items of listening and note taking and grades wasn't significant, the correlation between the scores of post-test and grades was strongly positive.

While there was a weak negative correlation between the scores of pre-tests on the items of class participation, writing, using library, getting prepared for and taking an exam and grades ( $r=-0.052$ ,  $r=-0.025$ ,  $r=-0.123$ ,  $r=-0.074$  respectively), the relationship between the scores of post-test and grades was reduced to a very weak negative correlation ( $r=-0.019$ ,  $r=-0.009$ ,  $r=-0.103$ ,  $r=-0.013$  respectively).

While there was a weak positive correlation between the scores of pre-tests on the items of motivation, health and nutrition and grades ( $r=0,049$ ,  $r=0,008$  respectively), this relationship was more significant in the scores of the post test ( $r=0,098$ ,  $r=0,40$  respectively).

### Conclusion and Discussion

The study has found statistically significant differences between the results of the first and final applications of the subtests on study skills and learning habits ; those subtests covered the items as learning, planned study, effective reading, listening, writing, note taking, lesson participation, using the library, getting prepared for and taking exams, motivation, health and nutrition.

The fact that the scores of the post tests for the evaluation of studying and learning activities were higher than those of pre tests may be related to the learning experiences of the students in their academic studies and the supervising services.

It was observed that the students who couldn't use study skills effectively and couldn't apply learning strategies in a consistent way at the beginning of the term were able to acquire all these abilities at the end of the term. For instance, if a student who learns the basic concepts at the beginning of reading answers the questions and summarizes what he has already read, it is very likely that he will keep all the information in his memory for a long time. Various studies have indicated that answering the questions after reading each text will enhance the student success (Wittrock, 1986).

The students who did not have study plans or could not follow their plans at the beginning of the term were observed to have a well-planned study program at the end of the term. The significant differences in the scores of the post tests on such skills reveal that students perceive the importance of planned study (Tekgül, 2004; Yıldırım et al., 2000).

It may also be remarked that the students who studied according to a plan tried to balance their study hours with their social activities and also had higher success rates since they could evaluate their studies in accordance with their effectiveness. Having a plan is especially important for relating the new information to the previously learned information and for transferring the knowledge to the new areas. Different studies have shown that the people who do not have background information about some texts need a plan for comprehension (Ausebel, 1978; Royer, 1988).

The higher scores of post tests on listening skills may be attributed to the students' perception of the importance of active listening. Various studies have suggested that learning through listening is an important learning strategy (Porter and Mansour, 2003). The researchers have supported the idea that listening habit has an important effect on success (Rothkopf, 1970; Wade and Trothen, 1989; Semones and Brace, 1991; Yıldırım et al., 2000; Wella 2002). Listening has been emphasized as an important study skill that has an important effect on success and so has to be improved.

The higher scores of the post tests on note-taking may be explained with the fact that the students have already improved their note-taking skills. The students who paid attention to the basic rules of note-taking effectively may have been more successful. Some other studies have also supported the idea that adopting some effective rules of note taking increases success rates (Wade and Trothen, 1989). The other studies carried out for high school students have shown that the students who take notes and revise them regularly are more successful than others (Jacobson, 1989). Some other studies have also emphasized the importance of regular note-taking for success (Yıldırım et al., 2000).

The higher scores in the post tests on class participation may be attributed to the fact that students have grasped the importance of such a skill. Various studies have also suggested that students become more successful when they participate in group activities more actively and answer the questions during the lessons (Semones and Brace, 1991). In their studies, Semones and Brace stressed the importance of the preparation for the lesson, active participation and revision of previously learned items. Martin (2002) indicated in his study that it was important to pay attention to the subject to understand it, to listen to what was told during the lesson and to answer some questions about the content or topic.

The fact that students got higher scores in the post tests on writing skills may be related to the students' regarding it as an important skill. (Yıldırım et al., 2000). It has been aimed to improve the writing skill during university education or for some professions. To be able to show the important features of writing skill, the habit of careful reading should be stressed (Pratt, 2003). After reading, the learners' restating the information they have already obtained in other words leads to active learning and success.

When the habits of learners are analyzed in respect to using the library, it can be concluded that they have improved their ability to survey the resources, to evaluate the clues they have got from their research and to find the book they are looking for very easily (Semones and Brace, 1991). Semones, Brace and Martin have indicated how important it is to make a research and to make use of certain resources in order to attain success. The fact that the learners couldn't make use of reference books may be attributed to their limited knowledge of how and where to find the information. This finding is supported by Steele and Granidget (2002) who claim that students do not use library much because they haven't improved such skills.

The higher scores of the post test on getting prepared for the exams may be related to their understanding of how important it is to get prepared for the exams during the term. It has been observed that the learners who follow the rules of getting prepared for the exams get higher marks and become more successful (Tekgül, 2004; Martin, 2002; Semones and Brace, 1991).

The learners' enthusaism to study may be attributed to their understanding how important motivation and extrinsic stimuli were for success. Various studies have revealed that failure leads to the loss of enthusiasm to study (Glover and Corkill, 1987). Our study has shown that the students with higher scores in the tests on motivation also have higher success rates.

The higher scores of post test on health and nutrition may be related to the fact that they have obtained the essential information about the subject and have used it.

In the study, the students who had some anxieties about getting prepared for the exams and note taking were found to have lower success rates. So, some further studies emphasizing the importance of stress management have been planned.

Depending on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the students have been taught how study skills and learning strategies might affect their success and they have been made to perceive the relationship between motivation, effort and success with some necessary explanations.

#### Recommendations

1. Programs should be designed to improve students' study skills and learning strategies for all levels to make the teaching and learning process more effective.
2. More seminars that aim to motivate students to study and to improve their communication skills should be held.



3. The students who are known to have some difficulties in learning should be given some support to improve their study skills through individual or group counseling .
4. Further studies should be planned to show students that study skills are acquired at school and those skills maintain their importance after school life.

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