

Learning Outcomes in Social Studies of Secondary School Students: Role of Student Engagement and Gender

Dr. Arjinder Singh¹, Balraj Singh^{2*}

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present paper is to study the role of student engagement and gender along with their interaction on learning outcomes in social studies of secondary school students of Punjab. Sample (1022; Male=528 and Female=494) of the present study is all 9th Grade students studying in 27 government and 26 private Secondary schools situated in different parts of Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts and affiliated to Punjab School Education Board Mohali. Student Engagement of the students were measured with the help of Student Engagement Scale developed by Lam et al. (2012) and learning outcomes in social studies was measured with the help of learning outcomes in social studies test developed by the investigators. Test items contain for areas of social studies that is History, Economics, Political Science and Geography. One-way Anova followed by post hoc test revealed that students with high student engagement had better level of learning outcome in social studies than students with low student engagement. There was no significant difference in learning outcome in social studies of secondary school students on the basis of average and high level of student engagement. The secondary school students with average level of student engagement had better level of learning outcome in social studies than students with low level of student engagement. Male students had higher learning outcome in social studies than female secondary school students. Significant main effect of student engagement and significant main effect of gender are dependent upon each other to explain learning outcome in social studies among secondary school students.

Keywords: Learning, Social Studies, Secondary School Students, Engagement and Gender

Research in education significantly focus to enhance the learning outcomes in different areas of school learning. Learning in social science is relatively less investigated area as compared to learning outcomes in Mathematics, Science and Language. Even previous literature revealed that the meta-analysis was rarely found in learning outcomes in social science as compared to science and mathematics. In spite of New Education Policy 2020 still Indian school education system promote memory level learning. New Education Policy and National Curriculum Framework indicate the use of student engagement activities to learn by doing. Individual differences particularly based on

¹Professor, Sacred Heart International College of Education, Barnala, India

²Research Scholar, Punjabi University, Patiala.

*Corresponding Author

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the gender differences is important aspect in teaching learning process at school level in India as well as in Punjab.

Wang and Eccles (2011) revealed that school engagement and academic outcomes were time-varying variables, another way to show strong evidence of longitudinal relationships as parallel the change process of school engagement variables and the academic outcomes and examine the within-person relationships between them over time. Dunleavy et al. (2012) revealed that the longer students stayed in school, the less likely they were to attend and feel intellectually engaged in their classes. Findings of the study also revealed that students do better even having low intellectual engagement. Nogueira (2013) studied how the dimensions of self-efficacy were related to the dimensions of student engagement in school. The results indicated that the relationship between self-efficacy and engagement were positive and significant. Veiga et al. (2013) examined student's engagement in school, attending to academic aspirations and sex differences. Data showed positive correlations between the level of student's engagement in school and the level of academic aspirations. School engagement tended to increase as academic aspirations increased. However, the magnitude of the associations was modest for affective and behavioural engagement. Sex had no effect on the associations between academic aspirations and school engagement among the students who participated in the study. The level of academic aspirations was a significant predictor for all dimensions of school engagement, as well as for engagement total score. The results of the study suggested that those students who have greater intentions to continue their schooling tend to be more engaged in school, regardless of sex. Amir et al. (2014) explored the student's engagement level at schools based on gender and age in Malaysia. The study revealed that engagement level in school differs by age and gender. Younger students recorded higher school engagement level as compared to elder ones. Female students reported to have higher level of engagement when compared to boys. This shows that school environment was perceived differently by different age groups and genders. Gunuc (2014) studied the relationships between student engagement and academic achievement. The results revealed that there were significant relationships between the students' academic achievement and student engagement as well as between their academic achievement and especially the dimensions of cognitive engagement, behavioral engagement and sense of belonging. It was also found out that students with high level of student engagement had higher levels of academic achievement and that those with low level of student engagement had lower levels of academic achievement. Sharma and Sexena (2014) examined the Student Engagement and its Predictors among MBA Students. Research evidence shows that student engagement was positively correlated with learning and performance as well as personal development of the students. Dogan (2015) explored the relationship among student engagement, academic performance, self-efficacy, and academic motivation in middle and high school students. He revealed that student engagement, self-efficacy and academic motivation predict academic performance. Halm (2015) suggested that at the core of student engagement was a bond between teacher and students. A relationship of mutual respect and trust heightens student engagement. Those personal, academic, and professional goals that students bring to class also impact student engagement. Ishak (2015) study student engagement in the classroom and revealed that exhibit engagement as they were engaged to do the activity (behavioral engagement) and excited to do a group work (affective engagement) and make them aware on the importance of engaging students in learning especially in Social Studies. Singh et al. (2015) found that student engagement is considered as a strong predictor of learning. Collaborative engagement emerged as the most significant predictor of management competency, whereas

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both individual and collaborative engagements were found to be the significant predictors of indirect learning outcome. Sofie et al. (2015) revealed that boys were less engaged than girls and reported lower support from their teacher. Autonomy support and involvement partially mediated the relationship between gender and behavioural engagement. Martin and Bolliger (2018) analyzed the effect of age, gender and years of online learning experience differences on student's perception of engagement strategies. This study confirms the importance of all three types of engagement strategies in online learning, especially learner-to-instructor engagement. This reinforces the belief that institutions need to design and deliver engaging learning experiences for students to succeed in online learning. Teachers, students and administrators understand and define student engagement as the behaviours exhibited by students such as compliance, willingness and motivation to participate in the learning process. Both the cognitive and the emotional perspective were taken into consideration in defining student engagement. The forms of student engagement include the learners' active participation in the classroom, in extracurricular activities and in non-academic programs. The academic aspect however was believed to be of primary importance. Student's engagement has several benefits as it makes learning a more enjoyable experience, fosters student commitment, increases retention and positively impacts learners' futures as active citizens. Very little work has been done on student engagement in India. Indian education system at school level mainly focused on memory-based evaluation at the end of an academic year. Keeping in mind this importance student engagement was taken as independent variable in the present study. Second research gap were found particularly in a region of Punjab with respect to achievement in social studies in relation to student engagement and gender. The previous studies used scores of examinations conducted in school or by board for achievement in one or more areas of learning. In the present study specific standardized achievement test in social studies was prepared and used for better objective measurement of learning outcomes in social studies. Previously conducted researches did not focused on interactional effect of student engagement and gender on learning outcomes in social studies. In this study, research gaps were filled by examining interactional influence of student engagement and gender on learning outcomes.

Objective

To study the impact of student engagement, gender and their interaction on learning outcome in social studies of secondary school students.

Sample

Population of the present study was all 9th Grade students studying in government and private secondary schools situated in different parts of Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts and affiliated to Punjab School Education Board, Mohali. In Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts there were total 1334 Secondary Schools affiliated to Punjab School education Board, Mohali. Out of these Secondary Schools total 27 Government schools and 26 private schools were selected through stratified random sampling techniques. 20 students were selected from each school. Out of 1022 students selected for sample, 528 were male and 494 were female. 237 students fall in high level of student engagement, 513 students in average level and 272 in low level of student engagement.

Research Tools Used

1. Learning Outcome Test in Social Studies (Developed by the investigator) was used to assess Achievement in Social Studies of the students. This test consists of 54 MCQ items. Test items were prepared keeping in mind the knowledge, understanding and application

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levels. Almost all students can complete the test within 50 minutes. The test has high content validity. The test is also reliable because reliability of the test is found to be 0.82 through split half reliability test.

2. Student Engagement Scale (Developed by Lam et al.) was used to assess the student engagement. The reliability of Student Engagement Scale was calculated by following four modes:

a. Internal Reliability

A high level of internal consistency was demonstrated for all three (dimensions) subscales ($\alpha = .80 - .89$). The full scale also demonstrated acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = .78$).

b. Test–Retest Reliability

The student engagement scale was administered again to the Hong Kong subsample ($n=100$) 6 months later. The correlations between the two tests suggest a satisfactory reliability for the subscales and also the full scale.

c. Construct Validity

- i. **Three-factor model.** A three-factor model was tested. It was a model with three latent constructs: affective engagement, behavior engagement and cognitive engagement. The items in each of the respective subscales were specified as the indicators of these constructs. In addition, the covariances of the three latent constructs were set free. The analysis had the following results: $\chi^2 = 9849.65$, $df = 492$, $p \leq .001$; NNFI=.92; CFI=.93; RMSEA =.08. These results indicated that this three-factor model was a reasonable representation of the data.
- ii. **Second-order model.** Lastly, a second order model with student engagement as a metaconstruct was tested. In this model, affective engagement, behavior engagement, and cognitive engagement were specified as the first-order factors whereas student engagement was specified as the second-order factor. The analysis had the following results: $\chi^2 = 9849.65$, $df = 492$, $p \leq .001$; NNFI=.92; CFI=.93; RMSEA=.08. These results indicated that this second order model was also a reasonable representation of the data. The arithmetic mean of these two subscale scores was a parsimonious measure of student engagement.

d. Concurrent Validity

To test the concurrent validity of the student engagement scale, the correlations between the scale and the contextual factors, namely instructional practices, teacher support, peer support and parent support were examined. All three subscales and the full scale correlated moderately and positively with these contextual factors. The correlations of the three subscales and the full scale with the outcome variables were also examined. All three subscales and the full scale correlated positively with positive emotions, academic performance and school conduct. Their associations with negative emotions were small although some coefficients were statistically significant, which was likely due to the large sample size. It was also noted that compared with those of affective engagement and behavioral engagement, the correlations of cognitive engagement with academic performance and school conduct were relatively smaller.

Cross Validation of Student Engagement Scale

Before applying Student Engagement Scale on sample of present study, it was validated on present population. The scale was applied on 200 students studying in Govt. and Private affiliated schools of Punjab School Education Board, Mohali. Statistical analyses of the data on these students were done.

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Total 85.23% inter-item correlations are significant and only 15.57% inter-item correlations are not significant. Results shows that large number of inter-item correlations are positive (85.23%), which ensure the significant validity of the scale. Item total correlations of the data were also calculated. It was found that 93.93% item total correlations are positive and significant at .01 level. This ensures the (internal consistency) internal validity of the scale. Only 6.07% item total correlations are not significant. On the same data, reliability and validity of total scale were also computed. Reliability of student engagement scale was calculated by Cronbach's Alpha and the value is .855, which ensures the reliability of the scale.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In order to find out the significance of main and interactional effects of student engagement and gender on learning outcome in social studies of secondary school students, the 2-way ANOVA was used and its summary is given in the table 1.

Table 1 Summary of 3x2 Factorial Design of ANOVA for Student Engagement x Gender on Learning outcome in Social Studies of Secondary School Students

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value
Student Engagement	2929.244	2	1464.622	18.86**
Gender	1183.780	1	1183.780	15.25**
Student Engagement x Gender	854.599	2	427.299	5.50**
Error	78883.568	1016	77.641	
Total	715229.000	1022		

**Significant at $p \leq 0.01$ level.

Table 1 depicts that the F -value for the main effect of Student Engagement on learning outcome in Social Studies turned out to be 18.86 which is significant at 0.01 level thereby meaning that there is significant difference in the mean scores of Learning outcome in Social Studies of secondary school students on the basis of their Student Engagement.

Table 1 depicts that the F -value for the main effect of Gender on Learning outcome in Social Studies is 15.25 which is significant at 0.01 level. It means that there is significant difference in the mean scores of learning outcome in Social Studies of students on the basis of Gender. The F -value (Table 1) for interaction between Student Engagement and Gender on Learning outcome in Social Studies is 5.50 which is significant at 0.01 level. It reflects that the mean scores of Learning outcome in Social Studies of Male and Female students at different (three) levels of Student Engagement do not differ significantly. In the light of this, the null hypothesis that there is no significant interaction effect of Student Engagement and Gender on learning outcome in Social Studies of secondary school students is rejected. This shows that significant main effect of Student Engagement and significant main effect of Gender are dependent upon each other to explain Learning outcome in Social Studies among secondary school students. Therefore, it may be concluded that Learning outcome in Social Studies of secondary school students was dependent upon interaction between Student Engagement and Gender.

Further, posthoc tests for each pair of Student Engagement were computed (applied to compare the pair-wise mean difference) which are given in table 2

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Table 2 Posthoc Tests for Comparison of learning outcome in Social Studies of Secondary School Students on the basis of Three Levels of Student Engagement

Variable	Levels of Student Engagement	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Difference
Student Engagement	High	237	26.09	9.18	4.02*
	Low	272	22.07	8.34	
	High	237	26.09	9.18	.34 ^{NS}
	Average	513	25.75	9.12	
	Average	513	25.75	9.12	3.68*
	Low	272	22.07	8.34	

*Significant at $p \leq 0.05$ level, NS= Not Significant at 0.05 level.

Table 2 shows that the comparison of learning outcome in Social Studies of secondary school Students on the basis of high and low level of Student Engagement is significant at 0.05 level. It means that the mean scores of learning outcome in Social Studies of Students with low level of Student Engagement and high level of Student Engagement differ significantly. Further, the Mean Difference in the table 2 indicates (See Figure 1) that learning outcome in Social Studies score of Students with high Student Engagement is higher than Students with low Student Engagement. It may be concluded that Students with high Student Engagement had better level of learning outcome in Social Studies than Students with low Student Engagement.

Table 2 shows that the comparison of learning outcome in Social Studies of Students on the basis of average and high levels of Student Engagement is not significant at 0.05 level. It means that the mean scores of Students with average level of Student Engagement and high level of Student Engagement do not differ significantly. It may be concluded that there is no significant difference in learning outcome in Social Studies of secondary school Students on the basis of average and high level of Student Engagement.

Table 2 shows that the comparison of learning outcome in Social Studies of Students on the basis of low and average levels of Student Engagement is significant at 0.05 level. It means that the mean scores of Students with low level of Student Engagement and average level of Student Engagement differ significantly. Further, the Mean Difference in the table indicates that the learning outcome in Social Studies score of Students with Student Engagement at average level is higher than the Students with Student Engagement at low level. It may be concluded that the secondary school Students with average level of Student Engagement had better level of learning outcome in Social Studies than Students with low level of Student Engagement.

The mean scores of learning outcome in Social Studies of secondary school Students at different levels of Student Engagement are presented in figure 1.

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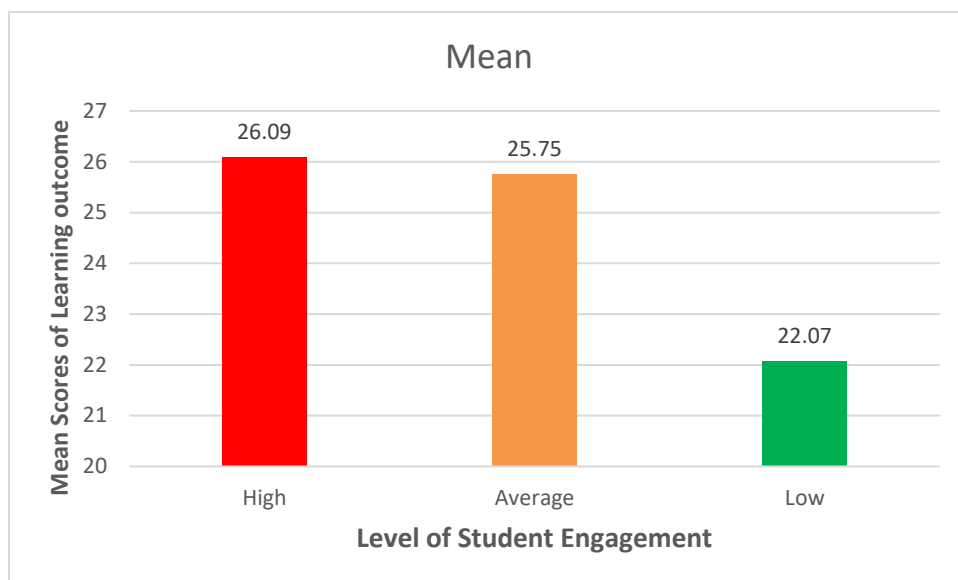


Figure 1: Comparison of Mean Scores of learning outcome in Social Studies of Secondary School Students on the basis of Student Engagement

Figure 1 depicts the mean difference in the scores of learning outcome in Social Studies of secondary school Students at different levels of Student Engagement. It is highlighted that the learning outcome in Social Studies scores of Students with high level of Student Engagement are better than those with average and low levels of Student Engagement. The learning outcome in Social Studies scores of Students with low levels of Student Engagement is lowest.

Findings

1. Students with high Student Engagement had better level of learning outcome in Social Studies than Students with low Student Engagement.
2. Students with average level of Student Engagement had better level of learning outcome in Social Studies than Students with low level of Student Engagement.
3. Significant main effect of Student Engagement and significant main effect of Gender are dependent upon each other to explain Learning outcome in Social Studies among secondary school students. Therefore, it may be concluded that Learning outcome in Social Studies of secondary school students was dependent upon interaction between Student Engagement and Gender.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Most contemporary researchers have agreed that student engagement is a meta construct covering numerous dimensions of involvement in school or commitment to learning (Appleton et al. 2008; Fredricks et al. 2004; Jimerson et al. 2003; Wang et al., 2011). Research indicated that behavioral engagement was directly and strongly associated with academic performance (Archambaut et al. 2009, & Hughes et al. 2008). Moreover, student engagement showed promise as an organizing principle in studying and improving school achievement. Students who were engaged in more than one way (e.g., behaviorally and affectively engaged, rather than only being behaviorally engaged) have exhibited higher levels of achievement. Behavioral engagement—including attention, participation, and effort in academic activities is a strong and consistent predictor of children’s educational outcomes (Fredricks et al. 2004 & Greenwood et al. 2002). Consistency of findings regarding relation

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between engagement and achievement suggest implications for teachers, parents and students to engage learners in all focus. Because research reveals that multi-dimensional engagement (i.e., behavioral and emotional, cognitive and behavioral etc.) strongly associated with higher learning. Research gaps was found for authentic student engagement which supported by cognitive constructivism, progressive education and social constructivism.

The finding of the interaction analysis was that the significant main effect of Student Engagement and significant main effect of Gender are dependent upon each other to explain Learning outcome in Social Studies among secondary school students. Thus learning outcome in Social Studies of secondary school students was dependent upon interaction between Student Engagement and Gender. Women get better grades in high school because they are more engaged than men; that is, they study more hours, interact more often with their teachers, and so forth (Epstein et al. 1998, McCarthy & Kuh, 2006, Mortenson, 2006). Others have found that women have more frequent and positive interactions with their faculty than do men (Sax et al. 2005). Male students were less likely to seek academic assistance from tutors, perhaps because of gender-related socio-linguistic factors and cultural pressures (Wright, 2003). Some studies show that men more frequently participate in class discussions than females (Fassinger, 1995 & Tannen, 1990), other studies found no effect (Howard & Taylor, 2002), while others indicate that women contribute to class more frequently (Drew & Work, 1998). Although, Fritschner, (2000) found no gender effect on active participation in class, gender had some influence on student fears.

It specifies that at high level of Student Engagement, male students benefited more for Learning outcome in Social Studies than female students. Similarly, at average level of Student Engagement, male students benefited more for Learning outcome in Social Studies than female students. Whereas at low level of Student Engagement, female students benefited more for Learning outcome in Social Studies than male students.

Overall conclusion can be drawn that at high and average level of Student Engagement, male students benefited more for Learning outcome in Social Studies than female students. Whereas at low level of Student Engagement, female students benefited more for Learning outcome in Social Studies than male students. Reason for this interactional effect seems difficult to explain. Further research is required with same objective in order to determine generalization and empirical explanation.

Educational Implication's

Significant findings suggest implication for teachers and administrators to plan different activities inside and outside the classroom to engage students. Parents can also contribute to maximize the student engagement by providing adequate support. Consistency of findings regarding relation between engagement and achievement suggest implications for teachers, parents and students to engage learners in all focus. Because research reveals that multi-dimensional engagement (i.e., behavioral and emotional, cognitive and behavioral etc) strongly associated with higher learning.

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Conflict of Interest

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