

Impact of Students' Geographical Learning Interest on Academic Performance at Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

Interest is a powerful sparking factor in students' academic success. It is a motivational state which encourages curiosity towards a particular subject, activity, or specific situation or environment. When students are interested in knowledge acquisition, they display more willingness to put in effort and persist through challenges, leading to greater achievement. Various research reveals that interest is a strong determinant of academic performance. Geography is a compulsory subject at secondary level. It provides the knowledge of natural & cultural environment & its relationship throughout the world. The present study examined influence of interest on students' academic success in learning Geography at the secondary level of education. The study's population was delineated and comprising all secondary students in class IX from 24 Parganas (N), West Bengal. A random sampling procedure was employed to select a sample of 200 students. The methodological framework of the research is directed by Analytical Survey research design. Validated 'Interest Inventory Scale' and 'Academic Achievement test' were drawn to investigate the study. Statistical methods including Frequency Analysis, t-tests, correlation analyses were employed to examine the data. t-tests were used to verify H_{01} & H_{02} at 0.05 significant level & correlation was used to verify H_{03} . The result of the research exhibit that majority of the learners have moderate level of interest towards learning Geography and no remarkable difference was detected in interest level between girls and boys towards learning Geography. It is marked that boys were better scorer than girls in academic performance. The remarkable finding reveals from the investigation that a remarkable correlation exists between students' geographical interest and their academic success at secondary level. It is highly recommended that by implementing attractive pedagogical approach, teacher educator should generate interest in Geography within secondary school students.

Keywords: *Interest, Academic Performance, Secondary Students, Geography, Motivation*

Students' insights, motivations, thought processes influence their learning behaviour. Students' psychological aspects are the foundation of their learning process in addition to learning or academic achievement. A stable psychological well-being of the students plays significant contribution in their academic performance. Academic achievement is the combination of educational, psychological and sociological perspectives

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of students (Udoh, 2005). Learning outcomes are the reflections of students' understanding, interest, attitude towards learning of particular subject. It denotes the magnitude to which a student has achieved the goal and factors which influence students' interest, attitude, aptitude, personality, recognition etc. (Suvarna, V. D., H. S. Sanesha Bhata, 2015).

Interest is a strong motivating disposition which regulates students learning activities. It presents feeling to focus & to be attached to the object, event or process. The people who work with the influence of individual interest, may consider motivated learner and they have presented every work purposeful, meaningful and sustaining (Reninger, 2020). Sembiring & Mukhtar (2013) coined out that interest is an object centered, activity related experience. Students who are interested in their learning materials, pay more attention, become more attached, analyse information potentially and finally they perform well (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000).

Geography is the compulsory and necessary subject at secondary level of education. Students can gain the knowledge of landforms, climate, drainage, vegetation, soil of the planet in one hand & on the contrary they gain the knowledge of worlds' cultural, economic environment also. It teaches the interaction and relationship between man and environment. Geography plays a critical role to develop spatial awareness, provides knowledge regarding local to global perspective, places and spaces. The subject encourages students to think critically how, when, what, where and motivates students to resource conservation and sustainable development. Not only that to acquire the ability of interpretation of physical and human phenomena, to understand the dynamic relationship between physical and human environment, studying Geography is most significant at secondary level of learning. It assists secondary school students to generate a sense of a dynamically changing world and society. Interest of students is that favourable psychological factor which acts as a catalyst to perform better in learning process. High interest towards learning Geography may improve academic performance in learning Geography (Sando, 2013).

Henki Warsani & Mamat Ruhimat (2016), stated that students who are interested and motivated in Geography tend to exhibit better learning behaviour with a feeling of love, happiness and interest towards learning Geography. Geography connects theoretical knowledge with the factual events which are happened in the practical sphere. Geography at secondary level provides a multitude of advantages that fosters global citizenship, environmental awareness, and develops creative thinking and sharpens innovative problem-solving strategy.

Interest is a basic tendency of the individual to engage in specific activities. Strong motivation can influence one's interest and preferences. At secondary stage, students enter in the adolescent period. Students' emotional, growth gain, higher level of maturation. Students are capable of analysing and justifying the consequences of action (Piaget, 1976). So secondary school students' interest should meet the learning materials. So that they can connect and feel the contribution of the research. Therefore, this secondary level is very crucial and transitional period after which they move on to higher secondary level. So, it is very essential to develop students' interest and perfect understanding towards the subject. (Nawaz Sarif *et al.*, 2020).

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Students' high interest in learning produces high academic achievement. Researcher like Adeyemo (2001 & 2005); Aremu (2005); Yoloye (2004); Bong & Svaalvik (2003) have shown that academic success is linked to socio-psychological factors.

The present study addressed the influence of interest in Geography on secondary students' academic excellence.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Overview of related studies assists to find out the loopholes in the related fields and helps to make tools for the study –

When teachers are more responsive and sensitive towards students' needs and interest, then students are more successful in their academic performance (P. A. Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Adedeji Tella *et al.* (2009) stated in their study titled "Locus of Control, interest in schooling, self-efficacy and academic achievement" that students' interest, internal-external orientation & personal competence significantly influence educational attainment of the junior students in the secondary phase and suggested that the stimulation of students' interest and teaching time management are necessary in every concern.

Milan Kubiatio *et al.* (2012) conducted a study on analysis of gender and grade level as predictors of geographical perception. 540 lower secondary students were taken as sample for the study. They found that boy students achieved higher score than girls towards the dimension 'Geography as a school subject'.

On the other hand, Chin R Reyes *et al.* (2012) investigated emotional tone of the classroom, students' participation and academic proficiency & competence of 1499 students of class 5th and 6th standard. It was found from the study that there exist direct and indirect link between emotional atmosphere in the classroom and their learning outcome.

Essien *et al.* (2015) in their article titled 'Students' motivation to learn social studies and success & academic growth in higher educational institutions, Cross River State, Nigeria mainly focused that correlation between students' enthusiasm and academic excellence in acquiring knowledge of social science and the result revealed from the study that a substantial relationship exists between students' motivation to learn social studies at their academic achievement. Additionally, it is recommended that educators or to explain the subject matter by arising students' interest.

Essien Ekpenyong Essien *et al.* (2015) investigated the relationship between students' motivation for social science & academic success in Nigerian tertiary institutions, cross river state. 753 students were randomly selected for the study. Questionnaire on a substantial relationship between students' motivation to learn social studies and achievement test were constructed to collect the data in this concern. The finding of the research indicates that students' interest is strongly associated with academic success in social studies.

Henki Warsani & Mamat Ruhimat (2016), examined the influence of interest and motivation of students in learning spatial reasoning in Geography education. 96 students of class twelve were taken as sample. Data were gathered using a questionnaire and subsequently analysed

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using normality test, homogeneity assessment and path analysis. The ultimate result was shown interest and motivation have profound impact on spatial intelligence enhancement.

Zainab Mohammed & associates (2020) analysed outcomes of motivation package on scholastic achievements in learning Geography of secondary learners in North JOS, Plateau State, Nigeria. Academic Assessment Test was utilized as a data collection tool. t-test and ANCOVA were adopted to analyse the data. The analysis reveals that private schools' academic performance is better than the public schools and the experimental group did not show a statistically significant difference from the control group in the pre-test Geography academic performance.

David Arhin & Emmanuel Gideon Tanney (2020) examined the influence of interest on students' mathematical proficiency. The findings of this study revealed that most of the students don't have interest towards mathematics and there exist a strong significant positive association between interest and academic attainment in Mathematics.

Okafor Ogechukwu Scholastica (2020) conducted a study that investigated enthusiasm for Physics is a key predictor of students' success in secondary grade. 300 students were the sample of the study. Physics Interest Scale and terminal continuous assessments were used to collect data. The findings suggest that learners having improved better interest in learning Physics may achieve higher academic score in the subject.

Agoestina Mappadang *et al.* (2022) examined 872 undergraduate accounting students' scholastic performance & its relationship with scholastic interest. The result of the research showed that high academic interest students carried better academic performance. This research proved that students' academic interest significantly determines their academic performance.

Ibrahim Abba Shani *et al.* (2024) has investigated indicator impacting productive pedagogy of Geography in higher secondary school of Borno State, Nigeria. A survey method followed by a questionnaire has designed to obtain the data. The analytical result of this study revealed that teachers' attitude, interest, qualification, use of perfect instructional material and students' attitude significantly influence on students' academic performance.

Significance of the Study

The subject Geography is a compulsory subject at secondary level. Geography provides the deep knowledge of the world. Very specifically Geography develops spatial thinking, environmental awareness, cultural understanding and a feeling of global citizenship. Interest of a student is that motivational factor which fosters better understanding and comprehension towards learning. Interest of learners can create effective engaging learning experience and supports high academic success. The present study will focus on the effect of interest in understanding Geography concerning the educational success of secondary school pupils. How interest affects students' academic performance is very important. Disparities or any difficulties can point out from the result of the study.

Not only that educators can identify relevant strategies of teaching that boost students' motivation and this can positively effect on academic performance.

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Delimitation of the Research

The current study is delimited to 200 students from secondary schools of 24 Parganas (North) district, West Bengal. 9th standard learners are selected to investigate the study. A similar study can be conducted in a higher secondary level in any other districts of West Bengal and a further study can be organised by taking large sample.

Objectives

- To estimate the interest towards learning Geography of the students of secondary schools.
- To estimate the academic performance towards learning Geography of the students of secondary schools.
- To compare the interest towards learning Geography between girls and boys of secondary schools.
- To compare the academic performance towards learning Geography between girls and boys of secondary schools.
- To find out the correlation between interest and academic achievement towards learning Geography of the resource of the secondary schools.

Hypotheses

- H₀₁: There is no significant difference in interest towards learning Geography between girls & boys of the secondary schools.
- H₀₂: There is no significant difference in academic performance towards learning Geography between girls & boys of the secondary schools.
- H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between interest and academic performance towards learning Geography of the students of secondary schools.

METHODOLOGY

By utilising an analytical survey design, this work undertook a detailed study to investigate the influence of interest towards learning Geography on the learning outcome of the pupils of secondary schools.

Analytical survey methods involve to investigate the interrelationships among variables. In this present study the students' interest serves as the independent variable while academic excellence is the dependent variable. The study has investigated the effect of students' interest towards Geography on the academic productivity at secondary level.

Population:

The entire class IX standard students of secondary schools, North 24 Parganas district, West Bengal, formed the population of the study,

Sampling:

A basic random sampling approach was utilised to select a representative sample of secondary schools, North 24 Parganas district, West Bengal.

Sample:

200 students from four secondary institutions of 24 Parganas (North) district, West Bengal, were the sample number of the study. Hundred boys and hundred girls were selected

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randomly from secondary schools to estimate their interest towards learning Geography and the impact of interest on their academic performance.

Table – 1
Sample Distribution

Area	Schools	Number of Students
North 24 Parganas	1. Sodepur Chandrachur Vidyapith For Boys	50 (Boys)
	2. Chowmoha High School	50 (Boys)
	3. Raghunathpur Girls High School	50 (Girls)
	4. Kholapota P. K. H. High School	50 (Girls)
Total	4 Schools	200 Students

Tools for Data Collection:

- a) **Interest Inventory Scale:** To measure students' interest towards learning Geography, an Interest Inventory Scale was constructed by the researcher. To conduct relevant study the instrument were sent to the two experts. Some items from the tool were reorganised and some were eliminated. This tool consists of 30 items distributed in six dimensions. These are: 1) Interest towards the subject Geography, 2) Interest to read the subject Geography, 3) Interest to write about subject Geography, 4) Interest to discuss about Geography, 5) Interest to study Geography in higher education, 6) Interest to research in Geography. Five point rating scale was adopted to mark the statement. Each positive statement was being scored in this manner – Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2) & Strongly Disagree (1) & each negative response was being graded in this following way: Strongly Agree (1), Agree (2), Neutral (3), Disagree (4) & Strongly Disagree (5). The 'Interest Inventory Scale' was settled & acknowledged as valid on the basis of experts' opinion.

- b) **Academic Achievement Test:** To test the academic performance in Geography of secondary school students, the researcher has constructed a short answer type question paper from the syllabus of class IX followed by 1) choose the right answer, 2) complete the gaps, 3) accurate or inaccurate, 4) identifying, 5) write in one word. It consists of 50 short answer type questions maintaining the syllabus of class IX of West Bengal Board. Each right response was being assessed '1' mark and each incorrect response was being graded '0'. No negative score was entertained. This tool was finalised and accepted as valid on the basis of experts' judgement.

Data Analysis Procedure:

Data to estimate Objective 1 and Objective 2 were analysed by using frequency analysis. Data to analyse Objective 3 and Hypothesis 01, researcher has used 't-test; and the Objective 4 and Hypothesis 02 were analysed by 't-test' also. To test Hypothesis 03 and Objective 5, researcher used Correlation.

RESULTS

Objective 1: To estimate the interest towards learning Geography of the students of secondary schools

Table – 2 Frequency table showing high, moderate and low level of interest of girl and boy students of secondary schools

Groups	High (Greater than 120)	Moderate (60 – 120)	Low (Less than 60)	N
Girls	10	85	5	100
Boys	9	89	2	100
Total	19	174	7	200

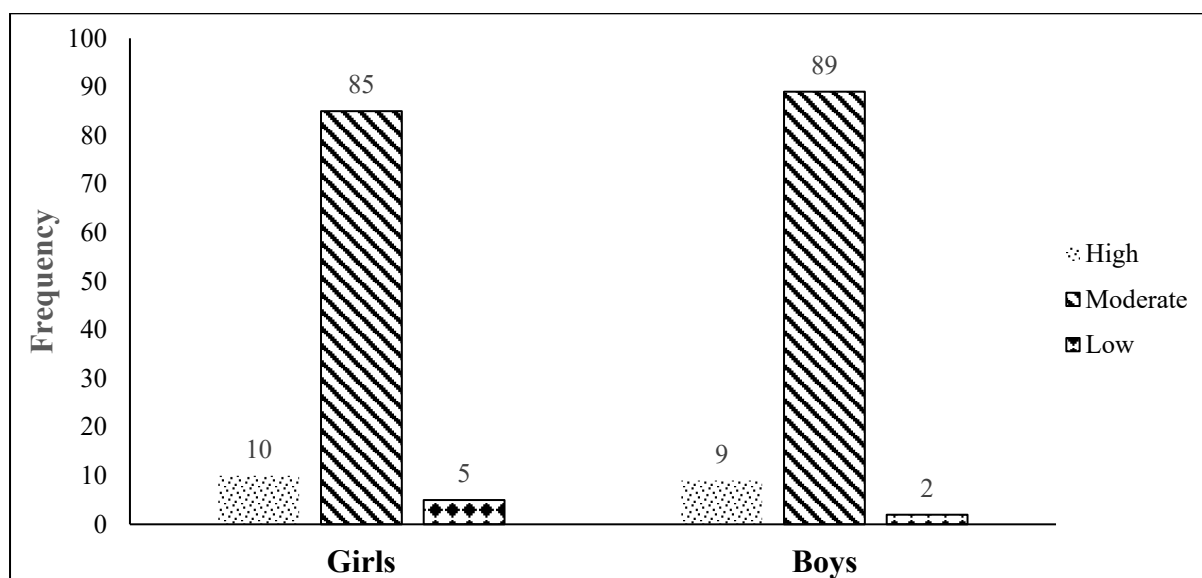


Fig. 1: Frequency of high, moderate and low level of interest of girl and boy students of secondary schools

Table – 2 shows the frequency distribution of secondary students to estimate the interest level towards learning Geography. It is found from Table–1 that 174 students having moderate level of interest out of 200 students. Only 19 students having high interest level towards learning Geography and 7 students have low level of interest in learning Geography. More specifically 89 boys and 85 girls having moderate level of interest, 10 girls and 9 boys having high level of interest and 5 girls & 2 boys having low level of interest towards learning Geography.

Objective 2: To estimate the academic performance towards learning Geography of the students of secondary schools

Table – 3 Frequency table showing high, moderate and low level of academic performance of girl and boy students of secondary schools

Groups	High (Greater than 35)	Moderate (15 – 35)	Low (Less than 15)	N
Girls	3	63	34	100
Boys	15	56	29	100
Total	18	119	63	200

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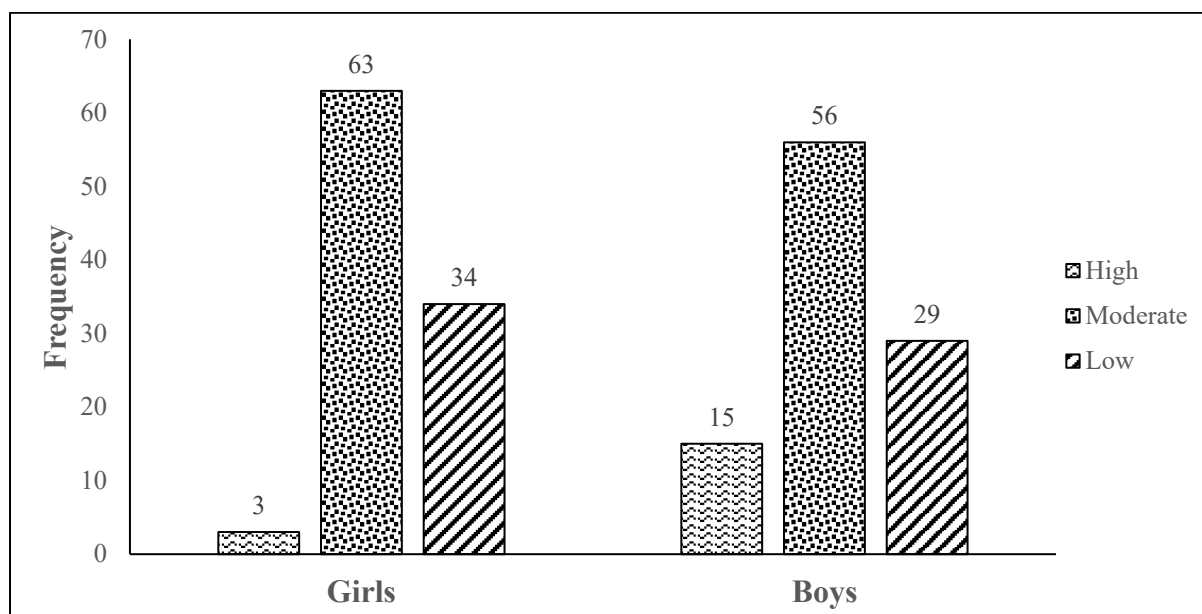


Fig. 2: Frequency of high, moderate and low level of academic performance of girl and boy students of secondary schools

Table-3 is showing frequency distribution of secondary school students' to estimate their level of Academic Performance. From Table-3 it is shown that 119 students have achieved moderate level of academic performance ranging from 15 – 35 academic score, 63 students have achieved low level of academic performance and their scores are under 15 out of full marks 50. On the contrary only 18 students demonstrate outstanding academic performance and their scores exceed 35 out of 50. Out of 119 students who have scored moderate, 63 are girl students and 56 are boy students. 34 girls and 29 boys have scored below 15. It is very surprising and despairing that only 3 girls and 15 boys have scored high academic score which exceeds the level of 35.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in Interest towards Learning Geography between Girls and Boys of the Secondary Schools (incorporated with Objective 3)

Table – 4 Difference in Interest towards Learning Geography between Girls and Boys of the Secondary Schools

	Gender	n	Mean	SD	MD	df	SE _D	t-value	Significance
Interest in Learning Geography	Girls	100	92.78	21.95	2.65	198	2.91	0.91*	Not Significant at 0.05 level
	Boys	100	95.43	19.17					

*t-criterion value at 0.05 level is 1.97 for df 198.

Interpretation: The mean scores show a significant disparity between girl & boy students of secondary schools in Interest in Learning Geography as the calculated t-value of 0.91 falls below the critical t-value of 1.97 at 0.05 level for df 98. Therefore, the H₀₁ is accepted and H₁ is dismissed.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in Academic Performance towards Learning Geography between Girls and Boys of the Secondary Schools (incorporated with Objective 4)

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Table – 5 Difference in Academic Performance towards Learning Geography between Girls and Boys of the Secondary Schools

	Gender	n	Mean	SD	MD	df	SE _D	t-value	Significance
Academic Performance towards Learning Geography	Girls	100	18.96	7.94	3.48	198	1.34	2.59*	Significant at 0.05 level
	Boys	100	22.44	10.81					

*t-criterion value at 0.05 level is 1.97 for df 198.

Interpretation: The mean scores show a significant disparity between girls & boys students of secondary schools in Academic Performance towards Learning Geography as the observed t-value of 2.59 exceeds the limit of table value of 1.97 at 0.05 level for df 98. Hence the H_{02} is not recognised and the H_2 is affirmed. The boy students are better since their mean score being 22.44 is higher than that of girl students being 18.96.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between Interest towards learning Geography of the students of secondary schools (Incorporated with Objective 5).

Table – 6 Correlation between Interest and Academic Performance of secondary school pupil

Groups	N	df	r	p-value	Significance
Interest	200	198	0.24	0.000	Sig. at 0.01 level
Academic Performance					

Interpretation: There is significant relationship between Interest & Academic Performance of students of secondary school as the correlation value (r) is 0.24. The positive value indicates that Academic Performance increases when Interest increases significantly at 0.01 level as the observed p-value of 0.00 is below than the p-value of 0.01 for df 198. The result supports the rejection of H_{03} and the acceptance of H_3 .

DISCUSSION

By analysing the above data, the results emphasised that maximum number of students carried a moderate level of interest towards learning Geography. Table–2 incorporates objective 1 which shows frequency distribution of the students having high, moderate and low degree of interest towards learning Geography. 174 students out of 200 students have moderate level of interest in learning Geography. Only 19 students exhibit strong interest in Geography, whereas 7 pupils show relatively low level of engagement in learning Geography. These results of the current research resemble with the findings of David Arhin and Emmanuel Gideon Tanney (2020).

Table–3 is associated with Objective 2 which is showing frequency distribution of the students having high, moderate and low level of Academic performance. The table shows that 119 students out of 200 students achieving score within 15 to 35 which is included in moderate level of academic performance. 63 students got the number below 15 out of 50. And only 18 students got more than 35 which is included in high level of academic performance. Out of 18 students only 3 girls got the number above 35 and 15 boys got the number above 36. From data analysis boys are better than girls in their scholastic performance. This observation is according to the previous work of Milan Kubiak *et al.* (2012).

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Table-4 shows Objective 3 which is pertaining to H_{01} . From this table researcher finds that the mean scores of girl and boy are statistically equivalent. Mean score of girls is 92.78 and boys is 95.43. The t-value is 0.91 which is below the t-criterion value of 1.97 at 0.05 level for df 98. So H_{01} is accepted and the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Table 5 shows the difference in academic performance in learning Geography between girl and boy students. The mean value of girls is 18.96 and the mean value of boys is 22.44. A remarkable disparity exists in mean score between girls & boys in their academic performance in learning Geography. The t-value (2.59) exceeds the critical t-value (1.97) at 0.05 significant level for df 98. The H_{02} is dismissed and H_2 is supported. Boys are better since their mean score is higher than girls' mean score.

The last table, i.e. Table-6 shows the Objective 5 which is incorporated with H_{03} . A statistically substantial correlation exists between interest & academic excellence in secondary level students. The correlation value (r) is 0.24. The positive value coins out that academic performance increases when students' interest increases significantly at 0.01 level as the p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.01 for degree of freedom 198. Thus, it is resulted that H_{03} is disapproved and H_3 is approved. This finding is similar and associated with the work of previous researches, i.e. Agoestina Mappdany *et al.* (2022), David Arhin & Emmanuel Gideon Yanney (2020), Okafor. O. Scholastica (2020), Essien *et al.* (2005), Ibrahim Abba Shani *et al.* (2024), Henki Warsani & Mamat Ruhimat (2016), Adediji Tella *et al.* (2009). This finding of the study is not incorporated with the study of Caroline L., Tron & Brinda, B. Kharbirybal (2021).

Educational Implications

The present study may be applied in various academic, scholastic and consultative setting. From the data analysis and interpretation, it is established that most of the students have moderate level of interest towards learning Geography and there is need to develop students' interest by which they achieve high academic achievement. Students show lack of interest in learning Geography which affect their academic performance. Geography at secondary level is a compulsory subject for all. The subject develops a sense of nationalism and internationalism. The feelings of 'Vausdhaiba Kutumbakam' which denotes 'We feelings' can be developed by studying Geography. The subject make an awareness to the whole world. This study depicts a picture of students' interest and its impact on academic performance. Students' performance towards learning Geography is not satisfactory. The outcome of this investigation may significantly contribute to enhance teaching-learning process of Geography. Teacher educators should employ interdisciplinary approach, introduce subject matter in an innovative way and must connect the subject matter with the real world. Thus, it may make easier to understand the subject and interest will grow towards the subject.

MAJOR FINDINGS:

After analysing the data, the researcher has found the following matters:

1. The majority numbers of students of secondary schools have moderate interest level in learning Geography.
2. Majority of the pupils carrying moderate learning achievement in Geography.
3. There exists insignificant difference in interest towards learning Geography between girls and boys of secondary schools.

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4. There exists significant difference in academic performance between girls and boys. Boys' academic success exceeds that of girls.
5. A notable connection exists between interest and learning outcome. The increase of academic performance is controlled by students' learning interest towards learning Geography.

CONCLUSIONS

Taking into account the investigations of the research, it may be inferred that, most of the students not having interest in Geography. Students' academic performance is very low which may create a bad effect for the nation as well as the whole world. Because Geography provides the knowledge of topography climate, vegetation, resources, economy, animals, population etc. of the world. The study has analysed the students' interest and its impact on academic performance towards learning Geography at secondary level. They are in the midst of adolescent which is related with chronic mental problem, declining school grades, problem of sexual orientation and gender identity, risk-taking behaviours. This is the stage of 'Stress and Storm'. Teachers should foster enthusiasm within students and should apply appropriate pedagogical approach that an interest develops within the students. This type of study is very much relevant that measures the students' learning interest and its influence on academic excellence at secondary level. The outcomes of the research will make an awareness to the teacher educators to promote interest within secondary education pupils' perception of Geography learning.

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Conflict of Interest

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