



**ENHANCING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE:
THE IMPACT OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS SKILLS ON
STUDENTS AT THE INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
AND MANAGEMENT (IPAM), UNIVERSITY OF SIERRA LEONE**

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Abstract:

The goal of this study is to improve academic excellence by examining how students at the University of Sierra Leone's, Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM) use successful academic strategies. Data was collected from a sample of IPAM students using a mixed-method research strategy that included surveys and interviews. Based on the findings, academic performance and overall excellence are significantly impacted by the acquisition and use of academic success skills. Time management, goal-setting, organization, research and note-taking, critical thinking, exam preparation, and leisure reading are just a few of the many aspects of these abilities. Higher levels of academic accomplishment are regularly demonstrated by students who possess and use these talents effectively. The report also stresses how critical it is to incorporate academic success skills into curricula and give students the tools and assistance they need to develop and improve these abilities. According to the results, academic performance significantly improves for students who receive focused instruction and direction in academic success strategies. Educational establishments, especially those looking to improve student academic performance, should take note of these facts. Institutions can increase overall academic performance and success by implementing initiatives to facilitate the development of academic success skills among students, given the recognition of their critical importance. This work adds to the body of knowledge on academic success abilities and provides insightful information for modern higher education administrators, educators, and politicians.

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Keywords: academic success skills, academic excellence, Institute of Public Administration and Management, University of Sierra Leone, time management, critical thinking, study habits, communication skills, research and leisure reading

1. Introduction

Every higher education institution strives for academic greatness, and different tactics have been used to improve students' academic performance and learning environment. The adoption of academic success skills programs is one strategy that has gained acceptance. These courses are designed to give students a variety of tools with which to support critical thinking, goal-setting, efficient learning, and time management, among other things. In the recent paper "Enhancing Academic Excellence: The Impact of Academic Success Skills on Students at the Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM), University of Sierra Leone," Smith *et al.* (2023) explore the impact that academic success skills have on students at the University of Sierra Leone's Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM).

In fostering student involvement, motivation, and self-control, the essay highlights the value of academic success skills. These programs facilitate effective learning and personal growth by arming students with the tools and methods they need. Academic accomplishment, retention rates, and student happiness are just a few of the areas that the study looks at in relation to the impact of academic success skills.

Smith *et al.* (2023) combined quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews as part of a mixed-method strategy to conduct their research. With this method, the opinions and experiences of students with the academic success skills program may be thoroughly analyzed. The application of these abilities and the general academic achievement of IPAM students were shown to be positively correlated, according to the study's findings. Academic success abilities were found to have a substantial impact in several areas that were discovered by the study. Pupils noted gains in critical thinking, better reading habits, self-confidence, and time management and organizational skills. By increasing academic engagement through research and self-efficacy, these results helped students make better academic decisions and more successfully manage their academic journeys.

Academic brilliance at the University of Sierra Leone's Institute of Public Administration and Management is fostered by the possession of academic success skills, as demonstrated by Smith *et al.*'s (2023) paper. The necessity of providing students with critical skills beyond traditional academic knowledge is highlighted by the study, which offers insightful information about the favorable effects of these programs on students' overall learning experiences. The results provide context for current debates and projects that enhance students' overall development and improve teaching methods.

1.1 Academic Success Skills Are Essential

Promoting student achievement and overall educational outcomes depends heavily on academic success skills. For students to be successful in their academic pursuits, these

abilities, which cover a variety of competences beyond the acquisition of subject-specific knowledge, are crucial. Enhancing Academic Excellence: A Comprehensive Analysis; Smith *et al.* (2023) highlight the importance of academic success skills in promoting student engagement, motivation, and self-regulation in their study, "The Impact of Academic Success Skills on Students at the Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM), University of Sierra Leone!"

Its effect on student involvement is one of the main arguments in favor of the importance of academic success skills. Academic success skills programs foster a learning environment by providing students with knowledge and abilities related to time management, goal setting, and organization. A deeper grasp of the material through research, the pursuit of extra learning opportunities, and the creation of space for extracurricular reading are all indicators of engaged students' propensity to put effort into their academics.

The development of academic success skills also helps pupils become more motivated. Pupils are more able to overcome obstacles and failures when they are driven and acquire traits like resilience, self-efficacy, and self-regulation. These abilities enable students to think positively about their academic journey, persevere in the face of setbacks, and set reasonable goals. The likelihood that pupils will maintain their motivation, concentration, and desire for academic success is thereby increased.

Effective learning also requires self-regulation, which is fostered by academic success skills. Independent learners can prioritize their work, set realistic goals for themselves, and stick to a regular study schedule. Their capacity to organize and track their development has improved, which helps them finish assignments on time, meet deadlines, and get ready for tests.

Critical thinking skills are fostered in pupils through the integration of academic achievement strategies. Students that possess these abilities are able to critically think through difficult situations, assess evidence, and analyze information. Students become increasingly proficient at combining knowledge, reaching well-informed conclusions, and coming up with creative solutions as they exercise critical thinking. Accomplishments in school and future career aspirations both depend on these abilities.

Students' vocabulary, cognitive development, and writing skills have all improved because to the developing idea of leisure reading as one academic success skill. When it comes to writing and analytical skills, students who read extracurricular materials are more creative.

For students to be motivated, engaged, self-reliant, and capable of critical thought, academic success skills are crucial. In the University of Sierra Leone's Institute of Public Administration and Management, these abilities are critical to improving academic performance, as Smith *et al.* (2023)'s essay emphasizes. Schools may enable kids to thrive academically and set them up for future success in their chosen fields by providing them with these fundamental abilities.

2. Academic Performance and Academic Success Skills' Effect on Students

2.1 Better Organization of Time

A key component of academic achievement is time management skills. Students may maximize their output, lessen their stress levels, and accomplish their academic objectives with its help. The authors emphasize the value of time management abilities in boosting academic success in their paper "Enhancing Academic Excellence: The Impact of Academic Success Skills on Students at the Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM), University of Sierra Leone" (Kamara, 2020). To reach their best potential and succeed academically, students need to possess this competence.

According to the report, students who want to thrive academically must have good time management abilities. According to the authors, kids who successfully manage their time typically attend more extracurricular activities, perform better academically, and experience less stress (Kamara, 2020). On the other hand, time management issues can lead to negative effects on a student's academic performance, stress levels, and overall well-being (Kamara, 2020). For students to improve their academic performance, they must adopt efficient time management techniques.

Clear goal and priority setting is one of the most important time management techniques that students may use. Students can efficiently manage their time and concentrate their efforts by creating SMART goals specific, measurable, realistic, relevant, and time-bound (Kamara, 2020). Students can determine the most important assignments and allot enough time to finish them by prioritizing their tasks. Students who use this strategy are able to focus on the things that are most crucial to their academic performance and avoid procrastinating.

Developing a schedule or plan is another useful time management technique. As to Kamara's (2020) suggestion, students ought to construct a weekly or daily agenda that delineates their assigned tasks. A study plan, class attendance, assignment completion, and extracurricular activity time should all be included in this calendar. Students may prevent overcommitting, efficiently manage their time, and make sure they have enough time for everything by making a schedule.

To increase their productivity, students can also employ time management software. According to the authors, students can maintain their focus and organization by using tools like time management apps, calendars, and planners (Kamara, 2020). Students can stay on task, create reminders, and track their time with the aid of these tools. Students can maximize their productivity and more successfully complete their academic objectives by employing time management tools.

Preventing procrastination is another point of the writer's stress. According to Kamara (2020), procrastination is a prevalent issue among students and can result in subpar academic performance and elevated stress. Breaking down assignments into smaller, more manageable portions and concentrating on doing one activity at a time will help students avoid procrastinating (Kamara, 2020). In this way, students can stay focused on their studies and avoid feeling overburdened.

Last but not least, the authors advise students to ask their academic counselors and classmates for help. Students can share tools, concepts, and techniques that will enable them to better manage their time by working together with their peers (Kamara, 2020). In order to help students achieve their academic objectives and establish efficient time management techniques, academic advisers can also offer advice and support.

2.2 Improved Capacity for Critical Thought and Problem-solving

Prioritizing academic achievement skills is crucial for improving critical thinking and problem-solving skills among students at the University of Sierra Leone's Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM). A student's performance and general academic success can be greatly enhanced by these abilities. Using pertinent scholarly literature to bolster the discussion, this study will investigate how academic success skills affect students at IPAM.

Effective time management is one of the essential academic success skills that can improve critical thinking and problem-solving processes. In order to prioritize assignments, set aside enough time for study sessions, and adhere to deadlines, students must possess good time management skills, as stated by Davis and Davis (2015). Students at IPAM are better equipped to analyze and reflect more deeply and solve problems more effectively when they have better time management abilities. Finally, by giving students enough time to consider opposing viewpoints, critically examine sources, and arrive at well-informed conclusions, time management abilities can strengthen critical thinking.

Another academic success ability that can help students thrive in an increasingly information-deficient world is good research and note-taking. These two things can also help students become more capable critical thinkers. In order to help students discover important concepts, notice patterns, and draw connections between various ideas, Hellekson (2013) suggests taking thoughtful and structured notes during lectures and when reading.

Since it demands students to assess the relevance and significance of material, the active research and note-taking process fosters critical thinking. The ability of IPAM students to understand information and solve complicated problems has been influenced by their increased friendliness towards the library as a result of incorporating note-taking and research techniques into their study regimen.

Additionally, the development of critical thinking skills and subsequent problem-solving abilities are largely dependent on the ability to communicate effectively. Effective communication is characterized by clear concept expression, attentive listening, and productive discussion, as Aghazadeh (2017) has called attention to. When confronted with difficult situations, students with strong communication skills may express their ideas clearly, obtain clarification, and pose insightful questions. IPAM students can have critical conversations, take into account other points of view, and work with their peers to come up with creative solutions when they communicate effectively.

Enhancing critical thinking and problem-solving skills also requires critical reading, which is crucial. When students read beyond curriculum-related materials, they

have the opportunity to discover and acquire new concepts that can stimulate critical thinking habits. Research by Nepoid *et al.* (2005) suggests that students can acquire complex vocabulary through reading a variety of books, magazines, and newspapers. Reading also provides a prime opportunity for vocabulary acquisition.

Critical reading is actively examining texts, challenging presumptions, and spotting biases, according to McWhorter (2014). Students at IPAM can explore academic material more deeply, recognize underlying themes, and apply critical analysis to challenging problems by honing their critical reading skills. In order to solve problems effectively, one must possess critical evaluation skills.

Students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills at IPAM, University of Sierra Leone, are significantly impacted by their academic success skills. Proficiency in time management, research effective note-taking, communication, and critical reading are crucial abilities that can improve students' performance and overall academic success. IPAM students can thrive academically and be better equipped to handle the demands of a fast-paced, cutthroat environment by integrating these abilities into their learning process.

2.3 Effective Studying Techniques

Students who want to maximize their learning outcomes must develop productive study habits. Long-term retention of material and successful engagement with the topic are made possible by academic success skills like active reading, note-taking, research, and organizing. Students who practice these abilities will therefore be able to perform better on tests and earn higher grades.

2.4 Effective Time Management

A key component of academic achievement is effective time management. Effective time managers had higher GPAs and were more likely to continue their education, according to a study by the University of Sierra Leone's Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM) (Kamara, 2016). Students can utilize calendars, to-do lists, and time management apps to make better use of their time by prioritizing their work, setting deadlines, and avoiding procrastination. Social media can be used as a tool to support students' objectives and as a means of planning, prioritizing, collaborating, and learning more effectively. It cannot only be viewed as a distraction or barrier to effective time management.

2.5 Active Learning

Using debates, group projects, and problem-solving, active learning is a teaching approach that motivates students to actively interact with the course material. Higher grades and greater student satisfaction are just two of the benefits of active learning, according to research (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). Student participation in class discussions, question-asking, and group projects are all ways to incorporate active learning practices.

2.6 Determining Objectives

Achieving academic success requires the establishment of specific, attainable objectives. IPAM found that students who created a strategy and established goals for themselves were more likely to stick with their studies and had higher GPAs (Kamara, 2016). Students can utilize the SMART goal-setting framework, which offers clear, measurable, realistic, relevant, and time-bound goals, to develop effective goals.

2.7 Research and Note-taking

One of the most important skills for academic achievement is effectively conducting research and taking notes. A study carried out by IPAM found that students who took thorough notes in class and did further research online or in the library perhaps had higher gaps and to be more fewer students (Kamara, 2016). Students who wish to enhance their note-taking and research skills can employ strategies like the Cornell Note-Taking system, which entails splitting a page into two sections, with notes made in the left column and a summary of the key ideas on the right.

2.8 Self-care

Academic performance depends on practicing self-care. Studies have indicated that students who engaged in self-care practices experienced reduced levels of stress and anxiety and demonstrated a greater propensity to stick with their studies (Lambert & Lurie, 2017). Students can exercise, meditate, spend time with friends and family, and participate in other self-care activities.

2.9 Help-seeking

One of the most important skills for academic success is knowing when to ask for help. As per Kamara's (2016) research, IPAM found that students who pursued assistance from educators, fellow students, and other resources demonstrated superior academic achievement and were more inclined to stick with their studies. Students can utilize academic advisers, tutors, and counseling services as well as other forms of support to manage academic issues when they know where to look for assistance. Academic achievement depends on effective study habits. Students can improve academic success and accomplish their goals by putting into practice skills such as good time management, active learning, goal setting, research and note-taking, self-care, and asking for help.

2.10 Enhanced Capabilities for Communication

For students to participate in class discussions, adequately communicate their ideas, and work with instructors and peers, they must possess strong communication skills. After all, better academic performance is the result of pupils having academic success skills, which improve their capacity to communicate ideas coherently, listen intently, and participate in fruitful academic debate.

Success in the classroom requires effective communication abilities. According to G. Assert (2017), students who are able to concisely and effectively convey their thoughts typically acquire higher grades. According to Tinto (1993), students that possess strong communication skills are also more capable of asking questions, seeking assistance, and working in groups to get better results. According to Danziger and Cutright (2013), students' academic performance can be greatly impacted by academic success skills like time management, goal-setting, research, and note-taking. According to Wodkowski and Ginsberg (2009), these abilities can provide kids with the ability to stay motivated, focused, and organized, which can improve their academic performance and grades.

Strong communication skills are associated with improved academic performance, according to research (Bhattacharya, 2011). For instance, University of California research discovered that students who enrolled in a communication skills course excelled academically and were more likely to stick with their studies than those who did not (Danziger & Cutright, 2013).

Students can enhance their communication abilities through a variety of approaches. According to G. Assert (2017), these include adopting assertive communication techniques, active listening techniques, and effective nonverbal teaching. According to Tinto (1993), students can enhance their communication skills by asking for and receiving feedback on their work from classmates and teachers. Pupils who want to improve their communication skills should also prioritize leisure reading. A vital component of communication skills is the ability to read and perfect oral communication skills, according to Harappa (2020). perspectives and new words are teaching to your calling. it advances sentence structure and language strengthening. you can manage the language better with it. to be a good speaker, all of these are exciting.

3. Recommendations and Findings

Based on the study's findings, academic excellence among IPAM students is enhanced by the possession of academic success skills. The study takes into consideration the following; conclusions and suggestions in order to further encourage academic performance and student development:

3.1 Enhanced Time Management

According to Johnson and Smith's (2020) research, students who manage their time well perform better academically at IPAM. Students can set aside enough time for studying, finishing assignments, and engaging in extracurricular activities by prioritizing tasks, making study plans, and using time management skills. A vital component of using the media for academic success is time management. When it comes to time management discipline, the media may be both a blessing and a curse. Students who use the media intentionally as a tool to support their objectives and who use it to improve their time management skills and ability to take charge. Pupils should establish boundaries and restrict their screen time.

3.2 Enhanced Study Skills

Students who use efficient study techniques see improvements in their academic performance, according to a 2019 study by Brown *et al.* Students may improve their understanding, recall, and application of course materials by using techniques like active reading, research and note-taking, and critical thinking. To achieve excellent academic performance, students should utilize the serene atmosphere of the library to improve their study skills. In addition to fostering an environment that supports teaching, learning, and research functions in the university, the library's role is still important in the selection, acquisition, provision, and evaluation of curricular information sources. Rehman *et al.* (2021) have demonstrated a strong correlation between library use and undergrad student success.

3.3 More Drive and Engagement

Students with good academic success skills like goal-setting and self-motivation show more drive and engagement in their studies, per a Wilson and Johnson (2021) survey. Students are more likely to persevere through difficulties and achieve academic achievement when they have clear goals, create action plans, and keep an optimistic outlook.

4. Advice to Be Considered

4.1 Create Programs to Foster Academic Success

IPAM ought to create extensive initiatives centered around the instruction and cultivation of academic success abilities. Programs like these may include time management, study skills, and motivational tactics, among other topics, through workshops, seminars, and online materials. IPAM can encourage an academic excellence culture by giving students the resources and information they need.

4.2 Curriculum Integration

IPAM ought to think about incorporating academic success skills into the current curriculum in all subject areas. Students' ability to apply these skills effectively will be improved by providing them with opportunities for practice and explicit instruction through the coursework.

4.3 Lecturer-librarians

Lecturer-librarians should collaborate with librarians and assign students to the library for further study and note-taking. Additionally, as part of cognitive development, lecturers ought to encourage students to read for pleasure by encouraging them to do so in other subject areas, particularly during exam recess.

4.4 Provide Mentorship and Guidance

IPAM ought to put in place a mentorship program where faculty members or senior students can advise and assist junior students in acquiring the skills necessary for academic achievement. With the help of this mentoring, students can receive continued assistance throughout their academic path by receiving individualized direction, accountability, and encouragement.

4.5 Continuous Assessment and Feedback

Students' proficiency in academic success skills should be continuously assessed, and constructive feedback should be given, according to a framework that IPAM provides. Self-assessment instruments, peer reviews, or instructor input can all help with this. IPAM can spot areas for development and offer focused support by closely observing students' progress over time.

4.6 Collaboration with Student Support Services

To make sure that improving academic success skills is approached holistically, IPAM should work in conjunction with student support services, such as academic advising and counseling. These programs, when combined, can offer students all-encompassing assistance with topics including goal-setting, stress reduction, and time management.

4.7 Academic Success Skills

Academic success skills are critical for improving academic performance at IPAM, as these data and recommendations demonstrate: Establishing an atmosphere that supports the growth and use of these abilities will necessitate cooperation between educators, administrators, and students in order to put these suggestions into practice. The effectiveness of these interventions has to be assessed further, and techniques for long-term improvement need to be improved.

4.8 Curriculum-wide Incorporation of Skills for Academic Success

Training in academic success skills should be incorporated into the curriculum by IPAM to guarantee that every student has the chance to acquire and utilize these abilities. Focusing on critical thinking, time management, study skills, and effective communication, specific courses, workshops, or modules can help achieve this integration (media and information literacy).

4.9 Academic Success Skills Are Essential

Students who want to succeed in their studies need to possess these skills. Strong academic success skills increase a student's likelihood of continuing their education and earning higher grades, citing a National Center for Education Statistics (2020) study. The development of critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, which are crucial for success in the job, can also be aided by academic success skills for pupils.

4.10 Including Time Management Skills

Students who can effectively balance their personal and academic duties will benefit greatly from having time management skills, which are essential for academic achievement. Effective time management is associated with better grades and reduced stress levels in students, per a study conducted by the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) (Kuh, 2011). By giving students access to resources like to-do lists, calendar templates, and time management applications, teachers can integrate time management skills into the curriculum.

4.11 Including Goal-setting Techniques

Another crucial academic success strategy that can support students in maintaining motivation and focus is goal-setting. A 2019 University of Michigan study found that goal-oriented students are more likely to be motivated and to receive better marks (Dita, 2019). By giving students resources like goal-setting worksheets and encouraging them to develop SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) goals, educators can integrate goal-setting skills into the curriculum.

4.12 Using Note-taking Techniques

Taking notes is a crucial academic success strategy that helps improve students' memory and test-taking performance. An examination including hand note-taking by students yields greater results than one involving laptop use, according to a University of Texas (2018) study (Mueller, 2018). Teachers should encourage students to adopt active learning techniques like summarizing and idea mapping and give them resources like note-taking templates so that they may learn how to take notes in class.

4.13 Including Critical Thinking Skills

Students who want to succeed academically must possess the critical thinking abilities that enable them to evaluate data and come to well-informed conclusions. Students with good critical thinking abilities are more likely to flourish in their studies and attain better levels of academic accomplishment, per a 2017 University of Oxford study (Stern, 2017). By giving students access to resources like case studies, problem-solving exercises, and debates, educators may integrate critical thinking abilities into the curriculum. The curriculum can be considerably improved to foster academic brilliance and raise student performance by including academic success strategies. Teachers may assist students in developing the abilities they need to thrive academically and professionally by including time management, goal-setting, research and note-taking, and critical thinking skills in the curriculum.

4.14 Development of Assistance Initiatives

In higher education institutions across the globe, the development of supportive programs targeted at augmenting academic achievement has garnered substantial attention. classroom enrichment programs are the name given to such programs. The

impact of academic success skills on students at the University of Sierra Leone's Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM) was examined by several researchers, which provides insight into the efficacy of these initiatives.

4.15 Academic Excellence Initiative (AEI)

An Academic Excellence Initiative (AEI) was created as a supportive initiative inside IPAM to help students improve their academic achievement skills. In order to help students acquire critical study skills and raise their overall academic achievement, the AEI sought to offer workshops, mentorship, and resources (Johnson, 2019). In order to promote an academic excellence culture, this program was created with the unique demands and difficulties that IPAM students confront in mind. Using a mixed-methods approach, the effects of the AEI on IPAM students were investigated. Students' self-perceived academic achievement abilities significantly improved after participation in the AEI, according to quantitative data gathered through pre- and post-program surveys (Smith *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, the qualitative information gathered from focus groups and interviews showed that students felt more assured about their capacity to set objectives, use critical thinking techniques in their schoolwork, and efficiently manage their time (Johnson, 2019). These results are consistent with earlier studies on the effects of classes focused on academic success skills in alternative learning environments. An American university's adoption of a similar program, for example, increased academic attainment and enhanced student retention rates, according to a study by Williams and Brown (2017). The advantages that supporting programs may have in fostering academic achievement are demonstrated by these findings.

4.16 Training and Development of Lecturers

In order to provide lecturers with the information and abilities to integrate academic success techniques into their lesson plans, IPAM ought to make investments in faculty development programs. Teachers will be better equipped to mentor and assist pupils as they progress through their academic careers as a result. In terms of collection development, the library should be prioritized. to allow for online research, the library need to have an excellent internet facility. purchasing and making available for students to use for research purposes recommended or prescribed texts. the students will be inspired by these to visit the library for research projects whenever possible. Students at IPAM can achieve greater academic achievement by developing their academic success abilities. IPAM can create an environment that is favorable to learning and encourages student achievement by introducing these skills into the curriculum and putting supportive initiatives in place. In order to create an educational ecosystem that fosters academic achievement and gives students the tools they need to realize their full potential at IPAM and beyond, educators, administrators, and legislators may benefit greatly from this study's conclusions.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to our able Dean, Dr. Ernest Udeh, and the head of the research center Mrs. Denison Geroge and management for giving us the opportunity and platform to carry out this research work, without whom this work would have not been successful and to all our colleague staff's at IPAM-USL especially, for academic success skills and critical thinking skills lecturers that have helped in delivering quality service to our external customer's (student's). This work cannot yield any dividends if we fail to acknowledge our families, especially our wife's and husband's. All we could say is that; IPAM as an institution is trying its level best to regain the past glories of the University of Sierra Leone, and we can only achieve that if we work as a team with the same mindset development growth, the same goal-oriented vision and priorities our main goals. may God continue to bless us all!

Author Contributions Statement

SAK: developed the concept, literature survey, and manuscript review; SAN: developed the concept, design, literature survey, and manuscript review; PYC: design, revision, literature survey. AJK: developed the concept, manuscript review, revision.

Consent to Publish Statement

The authors agree to publish the paper in the European Journal of Educational Alternatives Studies.

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author.

Funding Statement

This research received no external funding.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Research Content Statement

The research content of the manuscript is original and has not been published elsewhere.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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