

Effects of Memorizing Quran by Heart (Hifz) On Later Academic Achievement

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Abstract

Current study was conducted to investigate the effects of memorizing Quran (Hifz) in relation to academic achievement and socio-cultural life of Huffaz. For the said purpose, Purposive sample of 36 Huffaz, (N=36) from different colleges and universities were approached. Results were compiled and assessed through SPSS, Content analysis technique and in percentages. The results revealed a significant difference in academic achievement of Huffaz before and after Hifz. Moreover the Content analysis showed overall positive impacts on education and socio-cultural life of Huffaz.

Keywords: Hifz, Childhood education, Academic achievement

Quran is the fundamental holy book of Islam encompassing 114 Surahs. Muslims have faith in the Quran as a reserve of great assistance and path for manhood with consideration of it as the ultimate revelation of God. Memorizing Holy Quran by heart can be said as encoding, storing and retrieving the text of Quran by practicing and reciting it again and again, a process known as *Hifz*. Hifz involves first encoding the text of Quran by giving it attention, storing it by maintaining the encoded information and then retrieving the information from memory stores. Muslims entitle a person as Hafiz (plural Huffaz) who completely memorizes the Quran [Hafiz (Qur'an), 2009]. God has given special privileges to the one who memorize the Quran in a number of ways in this world and hereafter (The rewards of memorizing Qur'an, 2006). As; Prophet (P.B.U.H) said, "Whoever reads the Quran, memorize it and acts upon it, on the Day of Judgment he will be clad with a crown of light, its light is like the sunlight and his parents will be clad with two garments better than the whole world and whatever it contains. So they would amazingly ask, What actions did we do to deserve this? They will be told, Because your son memorized the Quran" (AL-HAAKIM). At another place Prophet (P.B.U.H) said, "whoever takes a path of seeking knowledge by it, Allah will facilitate him a path to paradise because of it and indeed the angels lower down their wings for the student of knowledge, pleased because of what he is seeking (knowledge) and verily those in heavens and in the earth, even the fish in the water seek forgiveness for the scholar" (Best answers chosen by asker, 2009). Again, Prophet (P.B.U.H) said, "The most honorable and noble amongst my Ummat are the memorizers of (Holy) Quran and those who awake (for worship)". Also Prophet (P.B.U.H) said, "The carriers of the Holy Quran are those who are included and over led by the mercy of Allah" (Syed, 2007). At one place Prophet (P.B.U.H) said, "*Seeking knowledge is the duty of every Muslim man and woman*". Pursuing knowledge or education is a continuous activity in the society which develops human personality and grooms him for membership in it (Sharma, 2005). Education is a kind of pathway that stimulates the unfolding and development of basic personality structure (Singh, 2005). Osakwe (2006) describes education as a crucial tool in building a nation. Education is a systematic and continuous process of instructions and training which has been intended to diffuse information and to achieve the abilities, capacities and skills of an individual. This acquisition process enables individual to play their effective and efficient role for the nation and society. It implicates the physical, social, moral, intellectual and mental development of a person.

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Ashton (2000) defines education as, to develop human potentials, learn to obey elders and betters, indoctrination, acquisition of skills and knowledge, to become familiar with the roles of society and to learn respect, beauty, truth, others, environment and the self as well. A person in his/her life seeks two types of education i.e. one related to religion and the other is based on world knowledge called academics or formal education. Religious as well as formal education both plays a significant role in the life of an individual. The religious education provides a base to facilitate the formal education, as the religious education is the first preferred knowledge taught to an individual by the parents. Research studies showed that the early education interventions lead to increase long term learning (Campbell, Ramay, Pungell, Sparling & Miller-Johnson, 2002; Lazer & Darlington, 1982; Reynolds & Temple, 1998). Therefore childhood training is strength of massive worth in the far along academic journey which ultimately supports and eases the learning of the child. The primary childhood institute purposes at mounting the intellectual and emotional probable at early age (Feeney, Chritensen and Moravick, 1987). Miedel and Reynolds (1999) are of view that the participation of families in child's early training gives them acquaintance of greater accomplishment, once the child enters primary school and advanced stages of life. Therefore religious education and knowledge contributes as an initial step towards early education of a child which no doubt leaves prominent effects on the formal education of him/her. The more strong and enhanced early educational experience would be, the strong effects it would have on the later education.

The aim of current research is to explore the effects of Hifz, as a mean of early religious education on the later academic achievement of Huffaz. Hifz is a part of religious education which a person practices, mostly in early years of age. Hifz is a complex, complicated, tough, and memory-based task. The individual who memorizes the Quran certainly shows the effects of Hifz on his later academic achievements. Educational accomplishment refers to the practical achievements of the students after completion of a course of study (Academic achievement, 2009). In other words academic achievement is a process which involves the accumulation of both i.e. understanding novel skills and refining the prevailing ones (Entwisle & Alexander, 1990; Pungello, Kuperschmidt, Burchinal & Patterson, 1996). Hifz involves many memory enhanced practices. To memorize each and every word of Quran, exercises such as elaboration, visual imagery of the words, self-referent encoding of the text of the Quran, sequencing, chunking, and mnemonic coding are in practice today. Hifz as well as academic achievement both involve enhanced memory capacity and storage. So, it can be assumed that Hifz as an early religious practice prepares and enhances the memory capacity for further memorization of information gained by senses to the brain. Therefore, command over foundational notions assists for deeper considerate of further crucial and critical tasks (Baroody, 2003; Ferrari & Sternberg, 1998; Hiebert & Wearme, 1996). Thus it can be said that practice of various brain exercises in Hifz plays an essential role in acquiring high academic achievement for an individual who has memorized the Quran.

Research studies reveal that memorizing and continue challenging the brain prevents memory loss as Alzheimer and since the Hifz of Quran requires that a person should not only memorize but to repeat and rehearse the text every day which results in sharpening of memory. Ummat Muhammad (2003) narrated, The more one memorizes, the more easier it becomes to memorize more. This is an adage that *practice makes a man perfect* and it is as equally true for cognition as it is for physical skills. Although it is a thought that Cognitive Psychology emphasizes on meaning and thought, but there is another side of cognition i.e. automated process-which is equally important. Automatic progressions in attention, observation, memory and problem solving, permit an individual to execute difficult intellectual jobs easily, speedily and without any attention to minutes. This is because Skilled Reader's word recognition and understanding of language structures are rapid and automatic, since they can concentrate on the meaning of what they are reading. Automaticity facilitates learning by reducing resource limitations. It makes the students to perform the same tasks with the help of less intellectual resources. Intellectual process becomes automatic only after extensive practice. Thus practice should be regular and extensive (Bruning et al, 2004). According to Salisbury (1990), in an article devoted to drill practice and the computer, Specialists agree that certain critical sub skills must not only be well learned but over-learned and thoroughly practiced in order to be brought to a state of automaticity. Since students should have attained automaticity on component sub skills. In this way, students can concentrate on the Higher educational goals of critical thinking. Memorization of Quran, including work in Islamic and other disciplines is a skill that will help scholars and students achieve foundations for the higher order scholarly work and understanding. Kostler (1964) found empirical support in recent scientific work. He reported that brain becomes more efficient as the person becomes a drilled reader.

According to Salisbury (1990), speedy and efficient word-recognition and understanding is a critical prerequisite for successful reading and must become automatized before the reader is able to concentrate on such things as concepts and themes. Thus the aforementioned researches (Bruning et al, 2004; Salisbury, 1990; & Kostler, 1964) show the relationship between the skilled and automatic brain/memory practices with the formal education tasks and memorization while the researches (Campbell, Ramay, Pungello, Sparling & Miller- Johnson, 2002; Lazer & Darlington, 1982; Reynolds & Temple, 1998; Feeney, Chritensen and Moravick, 1987; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999; Scarbrough, 2001; Snow et al, 1998; Storch & Whitehurst, 2002; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998; Baroody, 2003; Ferrari & Sternberg, 1998; Hiebert & Wearme, 1996) show the impact of early/childhood education on later academic achievement. In the light of these researches the following hypotheses were assumed.

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant difference in academic achievement of Huffaz before and after Hifz.

Hypothesis 2: Memorizing Quran by Heart (Hifz) will positively affect the socio-cultural life of Huffaz

Method

Sample

A sample of 36 (N=36) Huffaz (21 male and 15 female) were selected from the colleges and universities of Peshawar and Rawalpindi having age range from 15-30 years. Purposive sampling technique and exploratory survey research methods were adopted for investigation.

Instruments

Questionnaire forms:

Two types of questionnaire forms were developed to explore the pre-post academic achievement and socio-cultural impacts of hifz on Huffaz. These forms were

- One for parents
- Other for Huffaz

Both forms included close as well as open ended questions.

i). Close-ended Questions

Close-ended questions are those that limit the respondents to substitutes, already set by the designer of the questionnaire. These questions are easy to program and examine and leaves fewer chances for unconventional responses. The alternates are presented to the respondents so they do not have to think hard for answering (McBurney, 2006).

ii) Open-ended Questions

Open-ended questions are the one that the respondents answer in their own words. In such questions answers are in narrative form (McBurney, 2006). Open-ended questions provide the respondent a chance to give elaborative and extensive answers to the questions. Open-ended questions help to understand the reasons and causes of the answers of the respondent to the researcher. In the present study open-ended questions were used for the same purpose.

Procedure

An exploratory survey was conducted to examine the effects of Hifz on academic achievement of Huffaz for the purpose of which two questionnaire forms were developed by the researcher. The independent variable was the *Hifz* and the dependent variable was the *Effects of Hifz* on Huffaz. As the study was exploratory one, therefore it aimed at to probe the overall effects of Hifz on the Huffaz with the help of developed questionnaires. One form was for Huffaz and the other for their parents which comprised Six (6) and four (4) questions respectively having both close as well as open ended. The nature of questions included in Huffaz interview form were about completion of Hifz, intentions behind Hifz and its effects on religious as well as on routine life and on academic achievement while the nature of parents interview form was regarded to the overall effects on their child's education and socio-cultural life. For exploration and investigation, face to face interviews were done with both Huffaz and their parents separately. In some cases both parents were interviewed while in some only one parent either mother or father were there to respond as per availability. The assessment of pre (before hifz) and post (after hifz) performance in academic area was quantified in the form of scores obtained from questions asked in Huffaz as well as in Parent's interview forms.

Similarly the exploration of socio-culture impacts of hifz was done with the help of same questionnaires. The results were then compiled and quantified through SPSS including t-test (related), content analysis and percentages.

Results

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation and t Value (Related) Showing Difference between pre and Post Academic Achievement of Huffaz

<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pre X	36	5.58	1.402	0.000
Post Y	36	8.17	-12.626	0.737

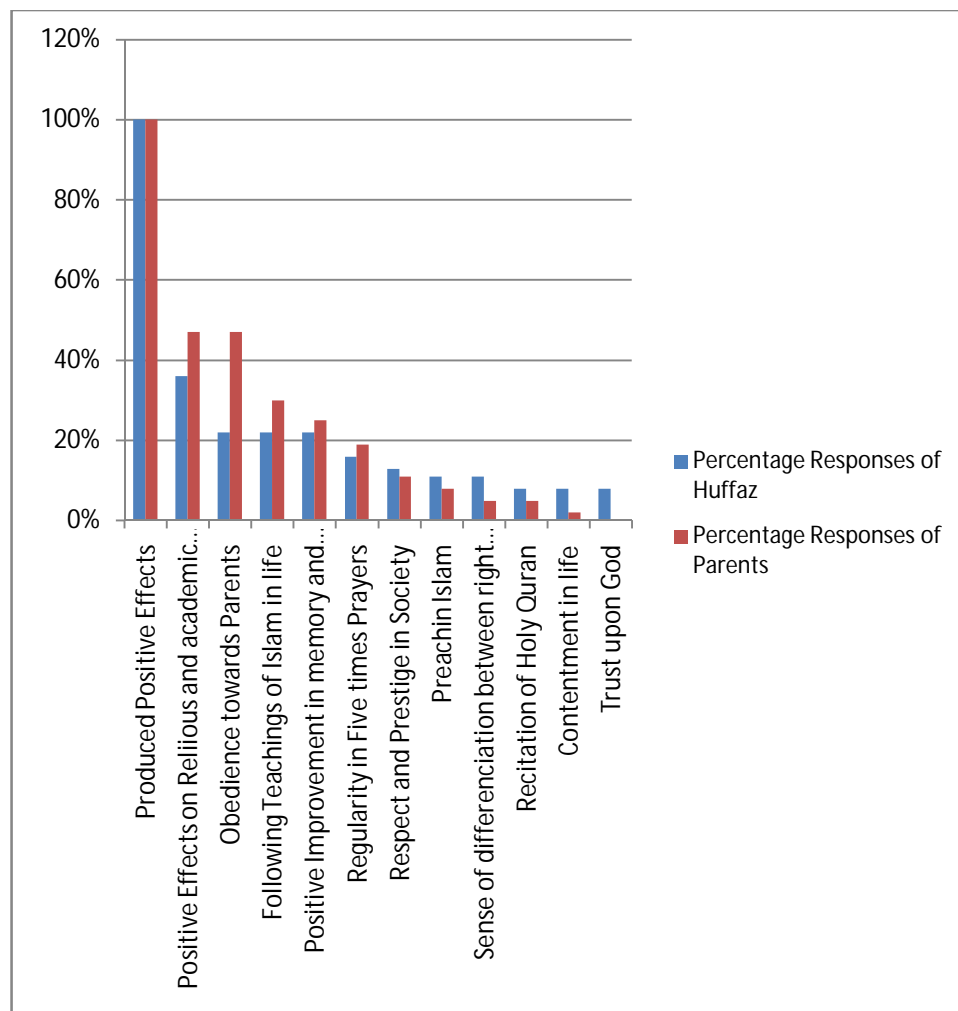
df=35

Results of Table 1 indicates a significant difference ($t=-12.626, p<0.01$) between the pre and post academic achievement of Huffaz. The above mentioned results suggest that there is a significant improvement in academic performance of Huffaz after Hifz. Thus supporting Hypothesis 1.

Pre X=Scores of self evaluation before Hifz

Post Y=Scores of self evaluation after Hifz

Figure 1: Content Analysis Revealing the Responses of Huffaz and their Parents



Total Number of respondents: 36

Content Analysis revealing overall positive impacts as an effect of Hifz on socio-cultural life of Huffaz.

Discussion

The present study was designed to explore the effects of memorizing Holy Quran by heart (Hifz) on the later academic achievement and socio-cultural life of Huffaz. The results of the study supported our Hypotheses and the data analysis showed that memorizing Holy Quran (Hifz) certainly produce significant improvement in academic achievement and socio-culture life of Huffaz. The results indicate a prominent and significant difference ($p < 0.01$) in academic performance of Huffaz before and after Hifz (Table 1). Hifz involves many memory enhanced practices and exercises which makes the brain skilled and automatized for other learning and memory-based tasks and practices. This automaticity in memorizing ability makes it easier for Huffaz to perform other memory based tasks such as formal education. Anderson (2002) proposed that the child exposure to early education shapes their higher communication capabilities, vital somatic skills, communal harmony and improved intellectual and emotional educational equilibrium. National Research Council and Institute on Medicine claimed that *the fundamentals of early intervention packages which improve societal and affective development are as essential as the modules that develop dialectal and mental proficiency* (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Duncan et al (2006) described that the skills children possess at when admitting to school might play a role of facilitator to get higher results in later life. If accomplishment at later age is the result of a successive progression of skill achievement, the consolidated skills earlier to school admission can lead children to command more innovative skills at an earlier age and even escalate their ultimate success.

Our second hypothesis investigated the Impacts of Hifz on socio-cultural life of Huffaz. In the result section, Figure 1 is showing the content analysis of responses given by Huffaz and their parents. For this purpose, an open ended question was designed to investigate the overall effects of Hifz on the personality and Socio-Cultural life of Huffaz. The question was about the overall effects of Hifz produced on Huffaz both in positive and negative ways. It was designed in such a way that respondents were open to answer in any direction (Positive/Negative) so as to avoid any bias and subjectivity by the researcher. The analysis of responses revealed that Huffaz and their parents reported 12 aspects in which Hifz affected Huffaz's personality and Socio-Cultural life. The results revealed that all reported responses were positive in nature and not even a single negative effect was reported. Cent percent (100%) of the sample (Huffaz as well as their parents) reported that Hifz produced overall positive effects. Further analysis revealed that 36% Huffaz and 30% parents stated that it has produced positive effects on religious as well as routine life of Huffaz. Twenty two percent (22%) Huffaz and 47% parents reported that because of the effect of Hifz, the Huffaz became more obedient towards their parents and now more strictly follow the teachings of Islam in their lives. In this regard the ratio of responses given by Huffaz was less than their parents which can be inferred by the fact that Huffaz started feeling these two acts as their duty and the fulfillment of these duties were incorporated in their personalities so much that they didn't find it necessary to emphasize them. Next, 22% Huffaz and 19% parents revealed that Hifz has positively affected the brain and memory of Huffaz in relation to their formal education which is also supported by Hypothesis 1 of our study. Also 16% Huffaz and 25% parents reported regularity in five times prayers with regard to Huffaz while 13% Huffaz and 5% parents reported that after Hifz their children are privileged and treated in society with respect.

Another important aspect mentioned by parents and their children was regarding preaching of Islam. After the completion of Hifz 11% Huffaz started differentiating between right and wrong and also started preachment of islam. This fact was also ascertained by the parents of Huffaz with a ratio of 8% and 11% respectively. Among the whole sample of 36 Huffaz, 3 Huffaz reported that after Hifz they started feeling contentment in life and their belief upon God became more strengthened. On the other hand, among the whole sample of parents ($n=36$) only one parent reported that after Hifz they noticed strengthened belief of their child upon God. About contentment in life no statement was reported by the parents. Here the response rate of Huffaz was high as compared to their parents which might be because these are experiences which are intrinsic feelings of a person and the other individual cannot assess such personal feelings of the other from his/her apparent behavior. Strengthened belief upon God and contentment in life is such feelings which the parents of Huffaz cannot assess by the apparent activities of Huffaz. Thus the ratio of Huffaz response in this regard was high as compared to their parents. Hifz is the process of memorizing Quran. Quran is the final revelation of God and is the chief source of all Muslim's belief and practice. It deals with all concerns of human beings; wisdom, doctrine, worship, law etc with the basic theme of God and His creatures. At the same time, it provides assistance and thorough lessons for social justice, human ethical conduct and common wealth system (Holy Qur'an, translation, tafsir, recitation recommendations, 2001). Bernard (2001) proposed the early childhood training is significantly correlated to school achievement in future life.

Lack of firm primary foundations may hinder child's emotional, social, intellectual and physical development in later life. Therefore for the proficient growth of the child's abilities, attitudes and behaviors, the primary education performs very vital role. Researches on primary education reveal that the said training produces a huge impact on child's growth and the role of teacher at this stage is of utmost importance. Thus foundational years are characterized by productive learning tasks and intelligent guidance for healthy growth and adjustment in later life. Primary education provides children to experience norms of family and morality of religion to strengthen their abilities (Osakwe, 2009). By having the content analysis the same facts are being depicted and the analysis of responses showed that Hifz produced overall positive effects on the life of Huffazz and made them a better person and human being.

Limitations and Suggestions

As the current study was exploratory one therefore the effects of Hifz can be investigated by using other methods and procedures as:

1. In the present study sample size was small and limited. So, for future researches it will be beneficial to have a large sample so as to generalize the results in a broader spectrum.
2. Other experimental methods and data collection techniques would be more useful for acquiring more detailed information about effects of Hifz.
3. Longitudinal study would be more helpful for investigating pre-post academic achievement of Huffazz by getting a baseline before hifz and follow up investigation in between and after memorization of Holy Quran so as to understand the effects of hifz on academic achievement over a period of time.
4. Comparison group study (Huffazz and Non-Huffazz) could be another way to see the differences in socio-cultural lives of Huffazz and Non-Huffazz.
5. Another important dimension for future researches could be to investigate the role of the mentor on the personality and character building of a child. Mentor is an experienced and wise advisor who teaches guides and helps the child in the process of memorizing Quran. An individual becomes influence by the company he/she keeps, while during the process of memorizing Quran a child spends most of his/her time in the company of the mentor. So obviously the personality of the mentor will produce certain effects on the personality of the child. Thus for future researches it can be assumed that by assigning an educated and learned mentor, one can channelize the potential energies of the young generation in a positive direction.

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