Cross cultural differences in students with regard to study habit – counseling as an intervention

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Abstract

The present study focuses in the Intervention Program aimed at improving the study habits of students. Academic performance is highly influenced by study habits. Study habits ensure the student actively works on their subject matter to retain what they were taught in class. We have 70 Iranian students, and 100 Indian students who live in a suburb and are not proficient in English. They are in different majors at Hyderabad University, India. This study was held to investigate the study habits of the students, and the way they learn to show their improvement in English language learning, their lessons and their self-awareness. Also self-counseling and group counseling had a positive impact on the student regarding how to adapt themselves with a new environment and new people. Self-counseling shows that students can improve their self-confidence, self-awareness and adapting to new situations.

Key words: Cross culture, Study habit, Counseling, Intervention

Introduction

According to Nuthana (2009) study habits refer to the activity carried out by learners during the learning process of improving knowledge. Study habits are intended to elicit and guide one's cognitive processes during learning. Good study habits are good assets for learners because habits assist students to attain mastery in areas of specialization and excellent performance, while opposite constitutive constraints to learning and achievement can cause failure.

As Patel (1976) mentioned study habits also include environment and planning of work, reading and note taking habits, planning of subjects, habits of concentration, preparation for examination, general habits and attitudes, and school environment.

Leaning style is described by Cassidy (2004) as "the individual's intellectual approaches to the processing of information". Honey and Mumford (1992) describe learning style as an individual preferred or habitual way of processing and transforming knowledge. Each learner has his/her own preferred way of perception; organizing and retraining that are distinctive (Chou& Wong, 2000, Griggs, 1999, Leutner&Plass 1998). Cross-cultural studies are applied widely in the social sciences, particularly in cultural anthropology and psychology. Cross cultural studies focus on the common and diverse traits or characteristics of the groups being observed.

In this study we observed some similarities in cross culture like facing difficulty in English language, new environments and experiencing home sickness and the purpose of being educated. The differences are education system, native language and cultural differences.

Intervention can be defined as a strategic solution to a problem which is truly analyzed and focused at the cause of the problem and solutions. It can be problem solving intervention and therapeutic intervention. There is a need for intervention on study habits as the very low understanding level and equally poor and deteriorating knowledge of many students is a great concern of educators, parents and government, and signals that students need help developing study skills include spending too much time

studying, taking class notes that are difficult to understand or contain the wrong information, procrastinating about large projects or tasks, being unable to identify what is important in a text, or being unable to remember what they have read.

Background

Mace (2002) pointed out that study is systematic acquisition of knowledge and an understanding of facts and principles that calls for retention and application. Kelly (1998) stated that study is the application of one's mental capacity to the acquisition, understanding and recognition of knowledge; it often involves some form of formal learning. Study skills refer to the student's knowledge of appropriate study strategies and methods and the ability to manage time and other resources to meet the demands of the academic tasks. Study habits typically denote the degree to which the student engages in regular acts of studying that are characterized by appropriate studying routines occurring in an environment that is conductive to study.

A study conduct by Marshall (1985) measured client preferences and satisfaction following the use of counseling approaches that were compatible with their learning style preferences.

Walker (2005) found that when schools implement programs that build resilience in this way, they are able to focus on the development of the whole child. Research supports the effectiveness of a range of school-based strategies for building resiliency; the most effective are those that leverage on the strengths students already possess, as well as identifying areas where improvements may be needed.

Thomas and Robinson (1990) emphasized that the learner needs to use a systematic discipline and purposive approach to study. Effective study consists of a conscious sequential series of inter-related steps and processes; the impact of educational interventions made in the first – and second – year course. It also addresses methodology, specification, and statistical analysis with respect to other studies in the field.

The Study

This study emerged out of experience and observation as a foreign student of Osmania University. Without a proper base in English language and also being in a new environment makes students who are from Iran and rural background, wade through various troubles. Foreign students have difficulty in adjusting to new situations, new culture, new people, and different education systems and for Iranian students English language is the most important concern.

Participants
The participants were the students of post-graduation (1st year) of Iran and Indian students from a rural area, who studied in various courses in Hyderabad, India.

The participants used to pilot this study were 10 Indian students and 20 Iranian students from various courses in Osmania University. The participants were 100 Indian students and 70 Iranian students in different courses in different universities in Hyderabad

Instrumentation
a)   Test of Proficiency in English
b)   Personality test (MBTI) & learning style
c)   Study habit inventory

Materials
The materials used in this study were proficiency test and personality test which conclude the intervention to guide students. Beside pretest and posttest they had an internal test which was held by the university. Intervention was used to help them to improve their habits and way of studying. All students had intervention twice during this study and some of them had it personally besides midterm exam and final exam.

Procedure
This study was conducted in two parts. Part one was a pilot study and part two was the main study. A few colleges were selected randomly for the study and then participants were informed about the study. First of all subjects were chosen from different faculties and a tes was conducted, such as Study Habits, proficiency of English, MBTI. The samples were identified and the purpose of the research was explained. Intervention strategies were designed keeping inmind, the scores of the study habits inventory and scores of students in the English proficiency test that had been conducted.

As each individual took the test in the following order, Study habits, Proficiency of English, learning Style and MBTI, the researcher established rapport and the Study habits procedure was administered. The Study Habits taken for each student were analyzed. The first English Proficiency Testwas administered and the results were analyzed. These two tests were the basis for starting the intervention. When the researcher found both groups had unsatisfactory study habits, Intervention strategies designed to transform their poor study habits into good study habits were undertaken. The researcher conducted group counseling sessions for the group of 10 students at each session. Every session included the explanation of good study habits technique based on study habits inventory aspect. At the end of the counseling session each student received prepared individualized instructions on altering their unsatisfactory Study Habits.

Proficiency of English test 1 was conducted to assess the student's skills. The total score was 50, and it was categorized into the three following categories: below average (0-20), average (21-30), above average (31-50), Proficiency of English test 2 was conducted after three months as a post test.

Group and individual counseling was conducted as per the requirement of students; multiple sessions were conducted to assist the students in achieve better proficiency in

English; each session included framing an action plan as per the individual needs of the students. The researcher was in contact with the students not only through the counseling sessions but also through phone and email.

To design the intervention strategies for better academic performance of students individual MBTI personality tests were administered. Understanding the personality traits of a person helps in planning an intervention which helps in understanding the best way of learning for each individual.

Data Analysis and Result

Pre Test and PostTest

Graph 1 and 2: Showing Comparison of Performance on Proficiency of English in Pre-Post Tests of Iranian and Indian Students
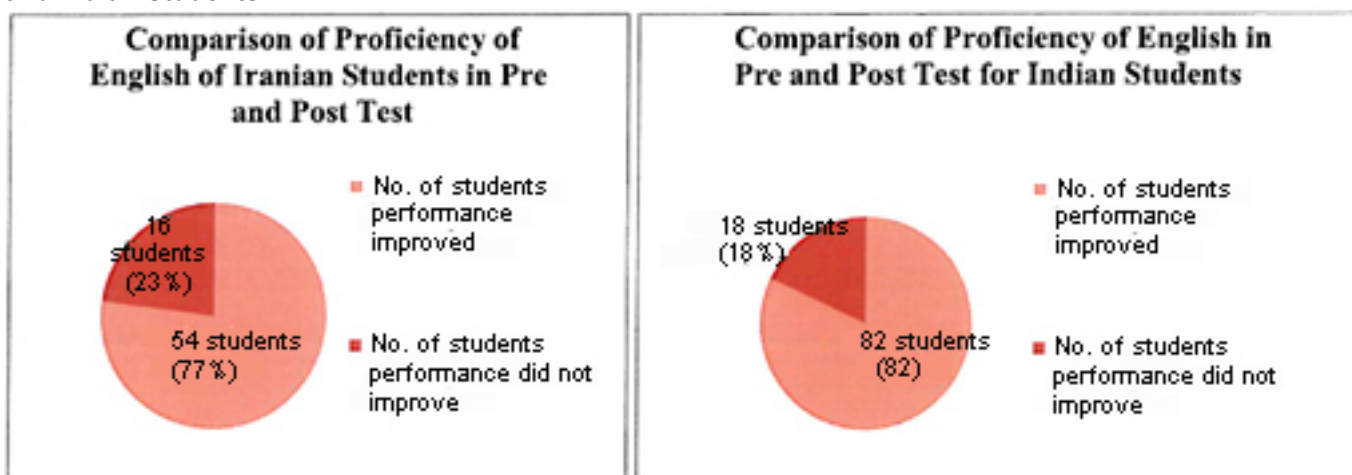

To show the effort was fruitful, we measured the Proficiency of English because, proficiency of English test was a critical point of study habits. Yhis was measured for each subject. Regarding the comparison of performance on Proficiency of English in pre and posttest, one can say that 77% of Iranian students improved in the posttest, with the help on Intervention in all skills, whereas 82% of Indian students improved in the posttest. We can interpreted that the intervention was effective on both categories of students, but Indian students improved more than Iranian students.
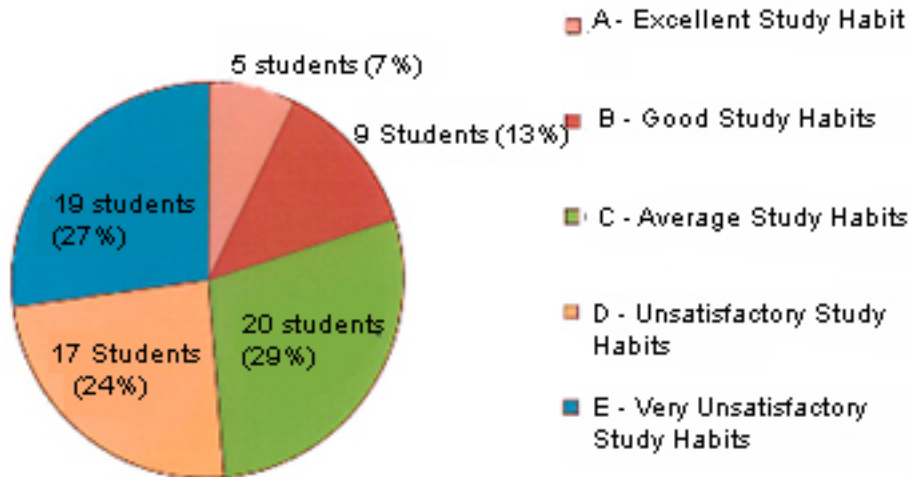
Study Habits
Graphs 3 and 4 show level of Study Habits of Indian and Iranian Students

Graph 3: Study Habits of Indian students
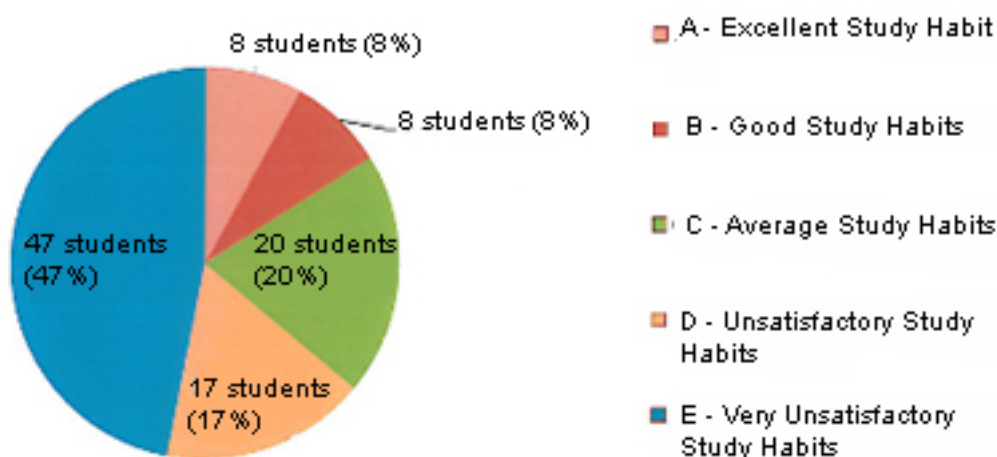
Study habits of Iranian students

Legend:
- A - Excellent Study Habit
- B - Good Study Habits
- C - Average Study Habits
- D - Unsatisfactory Study Habits
- E - Very Unsatisfactory Study Habits

The above graphs show the level of Study Habits of students in the Indian and Iranian Categories. The study habits were classified into different ranges from excellent to very unsatisfactory. The students' level of study habits are shown in the graph; there are very few students from both categories who were shown to have excellent study habits, that is 7% of Iranian students and 8% of Indian students, whereas 13% and 8% of Iranian and Indian Students respectively had good study habits, and 29% of Iranian students and 20% of Indian students had average study habits. However more than 50% of students belong to unsatisfactory study habit a part of graph. In the interview with the students, when they were given their study habits results, on enquiry, regarding their unsatisfactory study habits, the majority of students claim that the reason for their poor study habits it because of their low language proficiency.

Graph 5 and 6: Showing Performance of Internal Exam of Iranian and Indian Students

Legend:
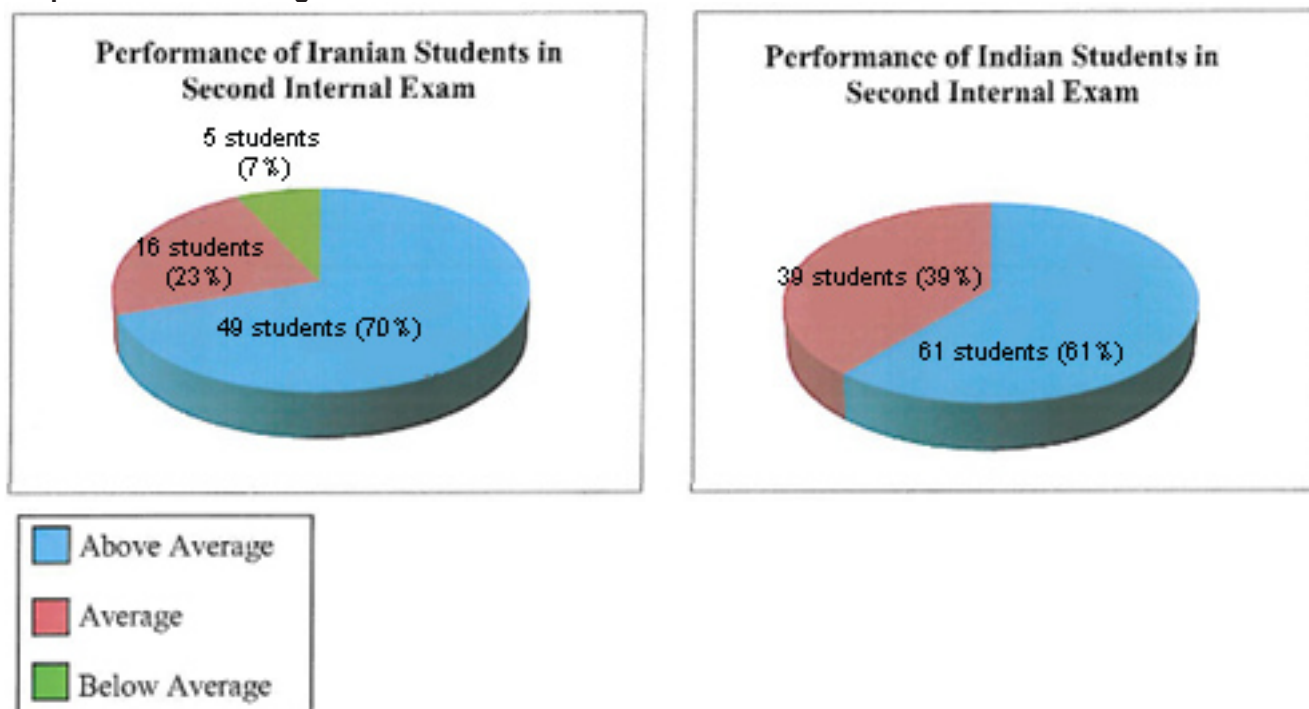- Above Average
- Average
- Below Average
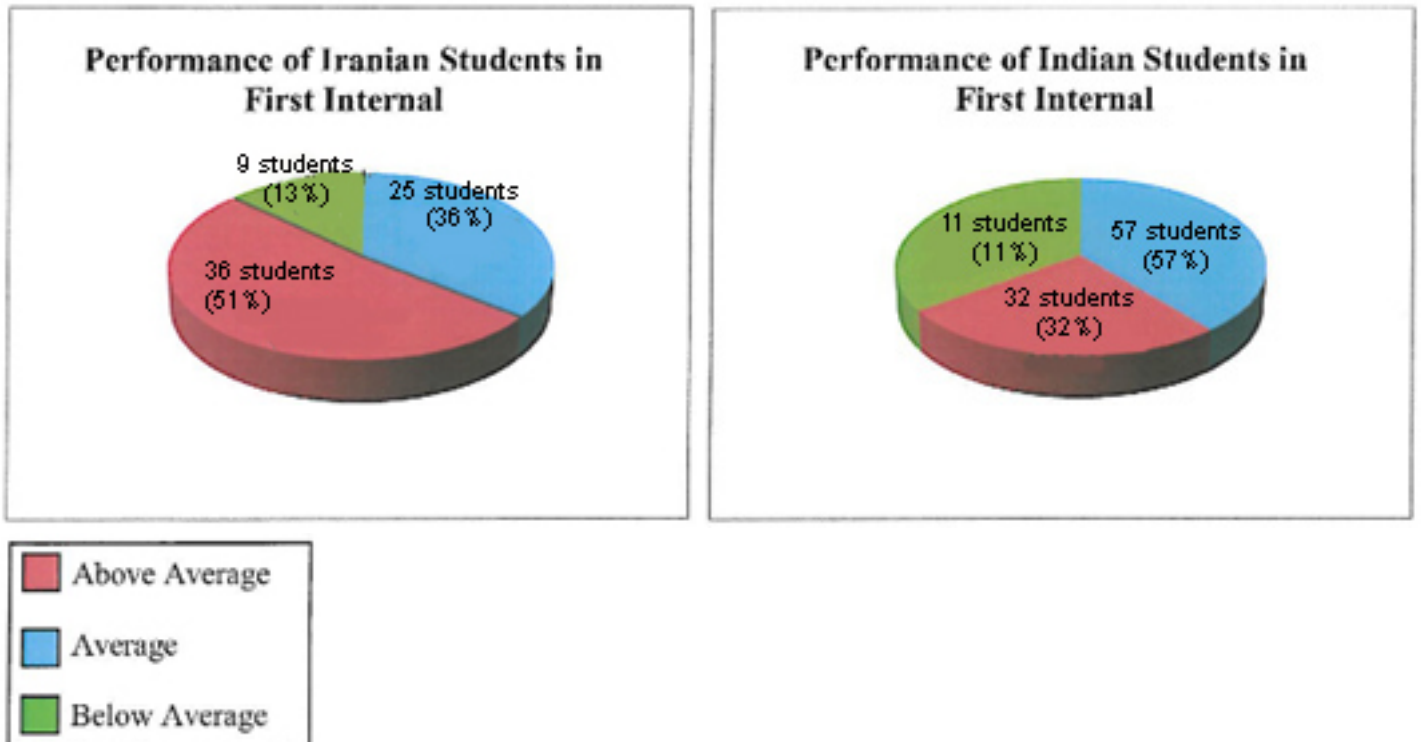
From the above graph it can be interpreted that, 36% of Iranian Students and 57% of Indian Students are in the Above Average Level of First Internal Exam, 51% of Iranians and 32% of Indian Students are showing Average Level and 13% of Iranian and 11% of Indian Students are at Below Average Level in the First Internal Exam.

Intervention was administered case-wise; the investigator administered tests like Personality and learning Style only to categorize them into groups. The Personality test was helpful in bringing awareness about their sensitivity to receiving Instruction and suggestions related to study habits. Intervention was carried out using means such as telephone, email, and face to face counseling, for each subject the multiple session intervention was given, between 3 to 4 sessions, with each session ranging from 40 minutes to one hour, Intervention spread across four months. After sitting the second internal

exam, the investigator met the subjects, counseled them regarding their performance, and suggested to them how they could prepare themselves to improve all study skills, how help them to make a contract with themselves, and set a study target, so that they can perform better in the final exam.

Graph 7 and 8: Showing Performance of Second Internal assessment Exam of Iranian and Indian Students


By this graph 70% of Iranian Students and 61% of Indian Students were at the Above Average Level at the Second Internal Exam, 23% of Iranians and 39% of Indian Students were at the Average Level and 7% of Iranians were Below Average Level of Second Internal Exam. Whereas there were no Indian Students whose performance was at Below Average level.

**Graph 9: Showing the comparison between First and Second Internal Assessment of Iranian Students**
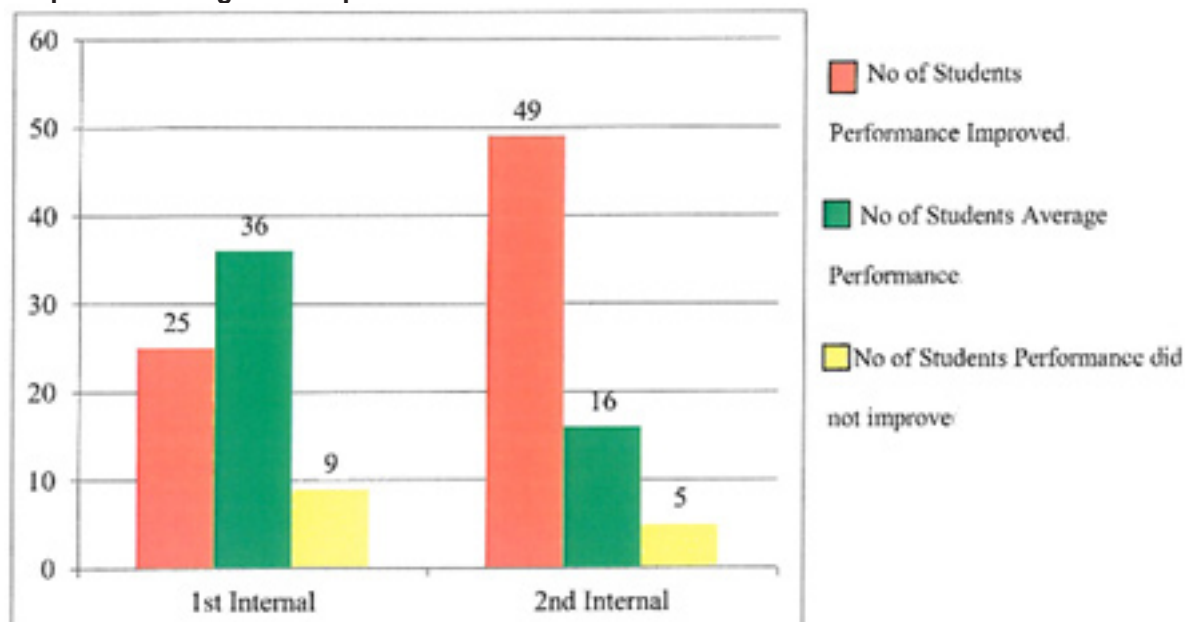
The above graph shows in the first internal exam 25% students were at above average level, where as in the second internal exam with the help of Intervention the performance had increased to 49%. Also in the first internal exam 9% students were at Below Average Level, whereas in the second internal exam with the help of Intervention the number reduced to 5%, and 39% students were at Average level in the first internal exam. In the second internal exam the students' performance went to above average level decreasing the average level performance. This shows that the students' performance improved in the second internal exam with the help of intervention.

Graph 10: Showing the comparison between First and Second Internal Assessment of Indian Students
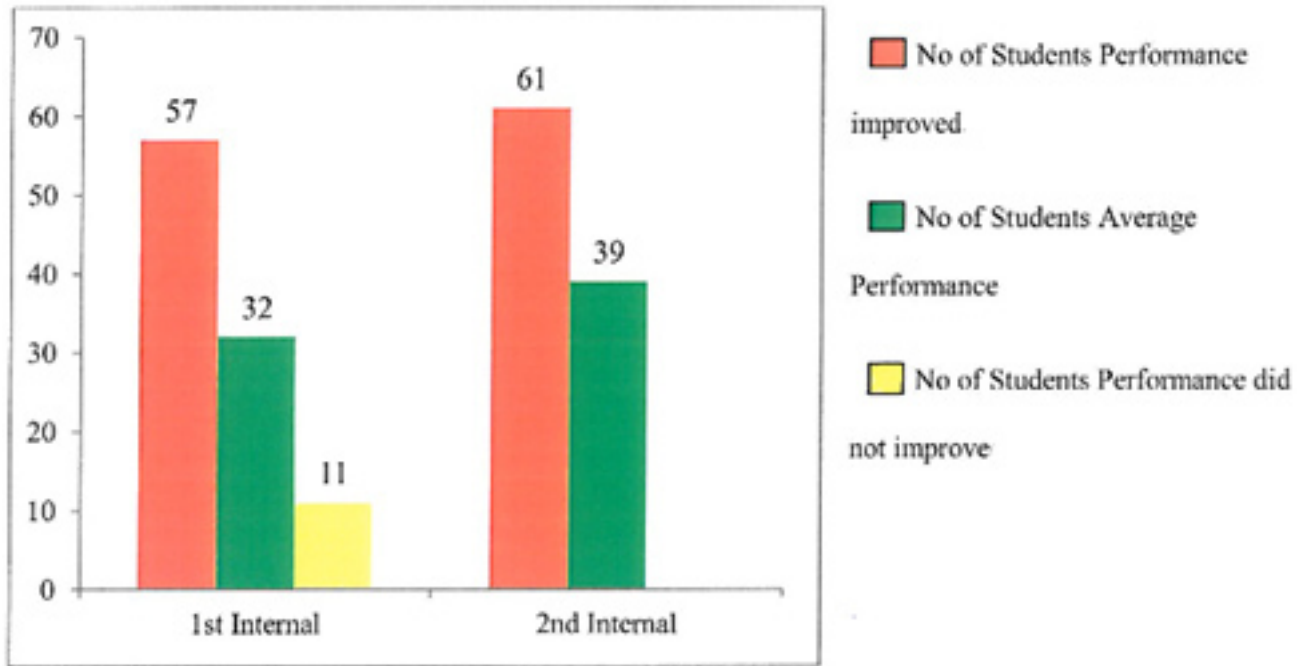
From the above graph it can be interpreted that, in the first internal exam 57% students were at above average level, whereas in the second internal exam with the help of Intervention the performance increased to 61%. Also in first internal exam 32% students were at Average Level, whereas in the second internal exam the average level of performance increased little to 36%, and 11% of students are at Below Average level in the first internal exam, and in the second internal exam there were no students at Below Average level. This shows that the students' performance improved in the second internal exam with the help of intervention.

Graph 11: Showing the Comparison of I and II Internal Assessment between Indian and Iranian Students
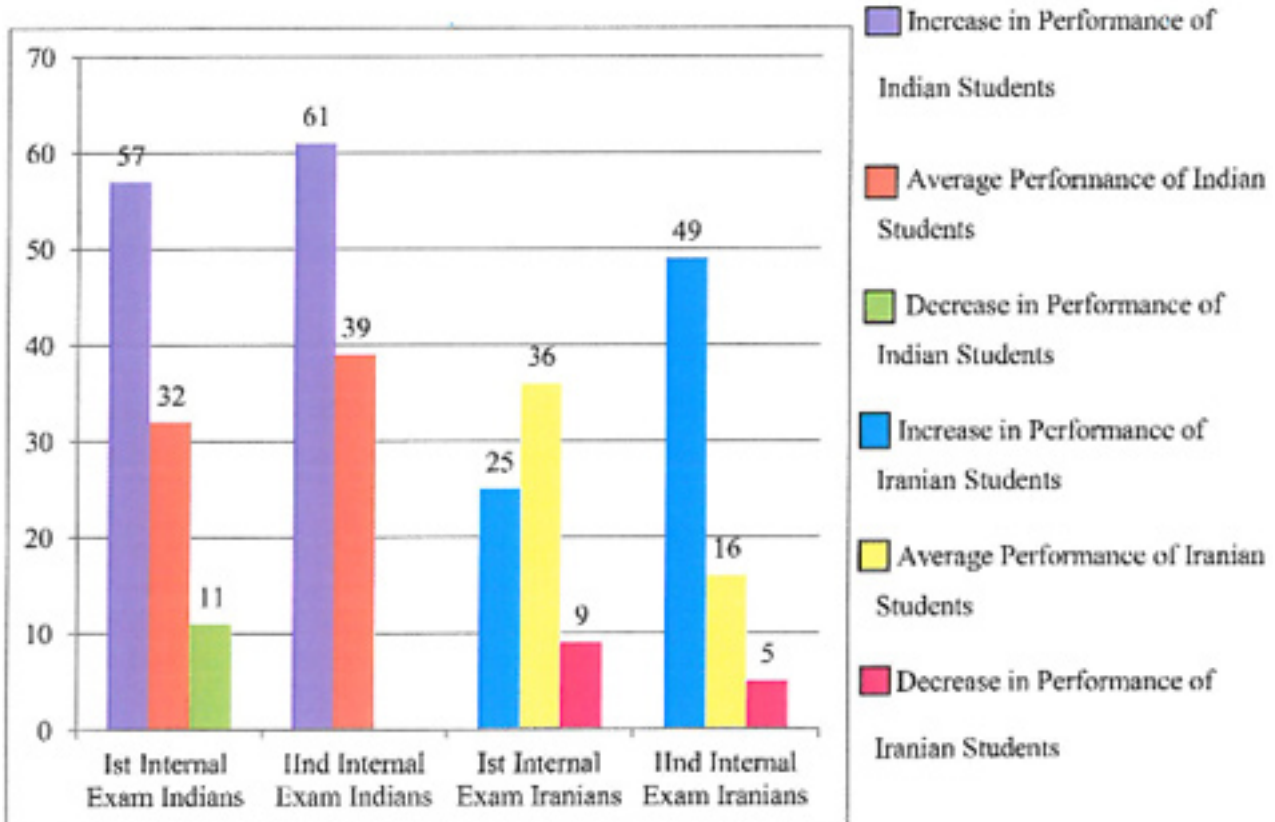
The above graph shows Indian students have improved on their performance in the Internal Assessment more than the Iranian Students. Already as it has been mentioned independently in Graphs 4 and 5 the number of increased and decreased level of performance of the both category students.

Conclusion

There was an improvement between First and Second Internal marks of both groups of students Indian students attained a score of 54 in the first internal assessment and a score of 58 in the second internal assessment. The Iranian students attained a score of 50 in the first internal assessment and a score of 54 in the second internal assessment.

Proficiency of English Post-Test was conducted, after a gap of 3 months of Proficiency of English Pre-Test. There is a significant improvement in terms of Proficiency of English in the scores of pre proficiency and post proficiency. In the pretest both the groups attained a score of 20 which is below average. They improved in the posttest, with a score of 25 for Indian students and a score of 24 for Iranian students.

There was an improvement in the First and Second Final Semester due to the impact of Intervention. Indian students attained a score of 79 in the first final semester and a score of 82 in the second final semester. Iranian students attained a score of 49 in first final semester and a score of 66 in the second final semester.

Iranian student's performance in the final examination was slightly better than Indian students; this can be attributed to their effort, goal oriented preparation and better adjustment level as the time passed. Intervention had a positive impact on their overall Academic Performance, as seen from the total marks of internal examination and final examination.

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