

## Studying Problems Facing New Integrated Program Students at Benha Faculty of Medicine

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### Abstract

**Background:** Medical professionals around the world are tasked with the responsibility of graduating well-educated and competent graduate medical student. This desired outcome can be achieved by ensuring satisfactory academic performance and academic success. **Aim:** is to assess the relationship between academic problems and academic performance among the new integrated system students at Benha Faculty of Medicine. **Method:** an observational cross-sectional study was conducted on 318 medical students at Benha Faculty of Medicine, using a self-administered questionnaire that consists of socio-demographic, the academic problems facing students and the reasons for the attendance or absence of students' theoretical and practical lecture. **Results:** Among the academic problems, there were highly statistical significant differences between the studied groups at 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> levels- regarding academic problems related to professor and academic problems related to courses (P=0.001). Also, there were statistical significant differences between the studied groups at different levels regarding practical part (P=0.003) and academic problems related to equipment (P=0.03). There were highly statistical significant differences between the studied groups achieved different academic performance (GPA) regarding academic problems related to professor (P=0.001), courses (P=0.002) and exams (P=0.01).

Regarding the correlation between lecture attendance and academic performance (GPA), there was statistical significant strong positive relationship between theoretical and practical lecture, attendance and academic performance (GPA) (p=0.001). **Conclusions:** There was statistical significant strong positive relationship between theoretical and practical lecture, attendance and academic performance (GPA).

**Key-Words:** Academic-Integrated-Performance-Problems.

## Introduction:

Education is considered as the most important step towards achieving any goal in many technological eras. It is also directly linked with an individual's well-being and personality<sup>(1)</sup>. Medical professionals around the world are tasked with the responsibility of graduating well-educated and competent graduate medical student. This desired outcome can be achieved by ensuring satisfactory academic performance and academic success<sup>(2)</sup>. Many medical students face different academic difficulties in which they are unable to meet the academic standards set for preclinical or clinical stages of the course. So, it is important to explore how medical students make sense of their academic difficulties, because their beliefs about the causes of their difficulties influence how they treat with support processes and remediation programs. Academic factors affect academic performance includes classroom attendance, prior academic achievement (i.e., GPA or grade-point average) and the concepts of self-regulated learning (SRL)<sup>(3)</sup>. Classroom attendance has a great impact on academic performance. It is an important issue for both students and their lecturers. So, the association between students' class attendance and academic performance had been the subject of several studies in a wide variety of courses. For students, class attendance is an important factor in developing competence, which creates a positive relationship with higher academic performance of the student. So, many studies identify that classroom attendance is an important determinant of academic performance outcomes; students

who attend more classes obtain higher final grades<sup>(4)</sup>.

**Aim:** is to assess the relationship between academic problems and academic performance among medical students at Benha Faculty of Medicine throughout achieving the following specific objectives

- 1- To identify the different academic problems that face medical students at Benha Faculty of Medicine.
- 2- To describe the relationship between classroom attendance and students' performance.

## Subjects and Methods:

**1. Study design:** This is an observational cross-sectional study.

**2. Study setting:** The study was carried out at Benha Faculty of Medicine on three academic years. Two different modules were included for each academic year.

**3. Study period:** The study period was from the first of December 2021 to the end of November 2022, in the academic year 2021-2022.

**4. Target population of the study:** The study included medical students at Benha Faculty of Medicine fulfilling the inclusion criteria.

**Inclusion criteria:** All medical students at Benha Faculty of Medicine following the program of Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery (M.B.B.CH), new integrated system who have previous GPA (2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> academic years).

**Exclusion Criteria:** 1st academic year Students as there is no previous GPA. Fifth and 6<sup>th</sup> academic years as they are not included in the new integrated program.

## 5. Sampling Design

### - Sample size:

Sample size was calculated using open Epi info software, total number of students was 1846, confidence level was 95% and frequency of outcome factor in the population was  $50\% \pm 5$ . So, the minimal required sample size was 318 students.

### - Sampling type and technique:

The students in each academic year were listed and divided into groups (sections or tutorials for each academic year). The required sample size was selected randomly from the study population (target population) by using cluster random sampling technique in which the sample population was divided into sampling unit, where the sample units were formed of groups of students for 2nd, 3rd, and 4th academic years. The sampling unit was one section or tutorial chosen from each year by simple random sample. All students- in the chosen group- were the target population.

## 6. Study methods and tools:

A self-administered questionnaire that was previously prepared and validated <sup>(4)</sup> including the following sections:

**(1) The first part was designed to collect data regarding the sociodemographic characteristics of participants:** age, gender, academic year, College GPA, living with his family or alone, distance between university and home and other questions related suffering from chronic illness, working during the academic year.

College GPA was used as a method to determine the academic performance of medical students at Benha Faculty of Medicine.

**(2) The second part was designed to collect data regarding the academic problems facing students and may affect lecture attendance.** This part included total 54 statements in the form of 5-point Likert scale. That was divided into multiple categories: twenty questions regarding academic problems related to professor, seven questions regarding academic problems related to course, eight questions regarding academic problems related to practical part and problems concerning organization, six questions regarding academic problems related to assessment factor (exams), six questions related to equipment and seven questions related to library.

**(3) Finally, the third part was designed to collect data regarding the reasons for the attendance or absence of students' theoretical and practical lecture:** At first students were asked to estimate the approximate percentage of the attendance in lectures and hours of operation in both theoretical and practical lecture, then they were asked about causes that prevent them to attend the lecture.

### **Administrative and Ethical design:**

- The necessary official permission to carry out the study was obtained from the dean of Benha Faculty of Medicine to conduct this study.

### **Ethical consideration:**

- An approval from Research Ethics Committee (REC) in Benha faculty of medicine was obtained to conduct this study (MS: 22-12-2021).

- An informed consent was obtained from all participants. It included all details about the study (title, objectives, methods, expected benefits and confidentiality of data).

**Data management and statistical analysis:-**

The collected data was coded, entered, analyzed then presented by suitable tables and graphs using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 26.0 for windows (*SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA*). The data was analyzed then the normality of distribution for the analyzed variables was tested using Shapiro-Wilk test or Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The collected data was summarized in terms of mean and SD for symmetrical quantitative data. A comparison between categorical data was carried out using the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) and Fisher's Exact test (FET). A comparison between numerical data was carried out using One- Way ANOVA (F) test. Correlation tests were also used. All tests were two sided tests, the accepted level of significance in this work was ( $p \leq 0.05$ ), and  $p \leq 0.01$  was considered highly statistically significant (HS).

**Results:**

This study shows that there were highly statistical significant differences in age among the studied groups achieved different academic performance (GPA) ( $P=0.002$ ). Regarding sex, It was illustrated that there were highly statistical significant differences among the studied groups ( $p$  value = 0.005). There were highly statistical significant differences regarding having chronic illness and the distance between university and residence among the studied groups with different academic performance (GPA) as well ( $p$  value = 0.001) (**Table 1**).

The current study reveals that there were highly statistically significant differences between the studied groups at different levels regarding academic problems related to professor that were about  $67.5 \pm 4.6$  for the forth level, course that were about  $24.6 \pm 2.8$  for the forth level ( $P$  value = 0.001) and practical part that were about  $26.9 \pm 3.8$  for the forth level ( $P=0.003$ ). Also, there were statistically significant differences regarding academic problems related to equipment that were  $19.8 \pm 2.9$  for the forth level ( $P=0.03$ ) (**Table 2**).

This study describes that there were highly statistical significant differences between the studied groups achieved different academic performance (GPA) regarding academic problems related to professor that were about  $68.6 \pm 5.0$  for students achieved accepted GPA ( $P=0.001$ ) and academic problems related to course ( $P=0.002$ ). Also, concerning academic problems related to exams, statistical significant differences were illustrated and ( $P=0.01$ ) (**Table 3**).

The present study illustrates that there were highly statistical significant differences between the studied groups achieved different academic performance (GPA) regarding theoretical lecture attendance that was about  $51.8 \pm 8.6$  for students achieved accepted GPA, while it was about  $89.3 \pm 5.6$  for those who achieved excellent GPA ( $P=0.001$ ) and practical lecture attendance that was about  $65.7 \pm 4.1$  for students achieved accepted GPA, while it was about  $92.9 \pm 5.3$  for those who achieved excellent GPA ( $P=0.001$ ) (**Table 4**).

This study demonstrates the highly statistically significant strong positive correlation between practical lecture

attendance and academic performance (GPA) (p=0.001) (**Figure 1**).

The current study demonstrates the highly statistically significant strong positive

correlation between theoretical lecture attendance and academic performance (GPA) (p=0.001) (**Figure 2**).

**Table (1):** Differences in socio-demographic data of the studied group with different academic performance (GPA) (N=318).

GPA		Excellent n=132		Very good n=63		Good n=85		Accepted n=38		p-value
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
<b>Socio-demographic data</b>										
<b>Age (mean ± SD)</b>		20.2±0.7		19.8±0.6		20.0±0.8		19.8±0.7		0.002**
<b>Sex</b>	<b>Female</b>	92	28.9	46	14.5	50	15.7	16	5.0	0.005**
	<b>Male</b>	40	12.6	17	5.3	35	11.0	22	6.9	
<b>Residence</b>	<b>with the family</b>	122	38.4	50	15.7	66	20.8	32	10.1	0.061
	<b>with colleague</b>	3	0.9	2	0.6	5	1.6	2	0.6	
	<b>in the university city</b>	7	2.2	11	3.5	14	4.4	4	1.3	
<b>Distance</b>	<b>Less than 15 minutes</b>	24	7.5	12	3.8	6	1.9	5	1.6	0.001**
	<b>15-30 minutes</b>	44	13.8	18	5.7	31	9.7	12	3.8	
	<b>30-45 minutes</b>	21	6.6	20	6.3	11	3.5	1	0.3	
	<b>45-60 minutes</b>	16	5.0	4	1.3	5	1.6	1	0.3	
<b>Work</b>	<b>60-90 minutes</b>	27	8.5	9	2.8	32	10.1	19	6.0	0.928
	<b>Yes</b>	7	2.2	2	0.6	4	1.3	2	0.6	
<b>Chronic illness</b>	<b>No</b>	125	39.3	61	19.2	81	25.5	36	11.3	0.001**
	<b>Yes</b>	5	1.6	4	1.3	8	2.5	9	2.8	
	<b>No</b>	127	39.9	59	18.6	77	24.2	29	9.1	

\*\*= highly statistical significant

$\chi^2$  = Chi-square test

**Table (2):** Differences in academic problems facing medical students at different academic levels (N=318).

Academic level	Second level n=116	Third level n=146	Forth level n=56	Total n=318	p-value
<b>Academic problems</b>	<b>mean ± SD</b>	<b>mean ± SD</b>	<b>mean ± SD</b>	<b>mean ± SD</b>	
<b>professor</b>	68.4± 4.6	67.5± 4.4	67.5±4.6	67.8±4.5	0.001**
<b>Course</b>	22.2±3.3	22.9±3.3	24.6±2.8	22.9± 3.3	0.001**
<b>practical part and organization</b>	24.6± 4.0	25.1±4.1	26.9±3.8	25.2±4.1	0.003**
<b>Exams</b>	19.2±3.3	19.1±3.2	20.1±3.2	19.3 ± 3.3	0.13
<b>Equipment</b>	18.6± 3.2	18.5± 3.1	19.8±2.9	18.8± 3.1	0.03*
<b>Library</b>	22.8± 4.0	22.8±3.5	23.3±3.0	22.9± 3.6	0.6
<b>Total</b>	173.2±13.1	176.6±13.7	185.5±11.5	176.9±13.7	0.001**

\*= statistical significant

\*\*= highly statistical significant

F= One Way ANOVA

**Table (3):** Differences in academic problems score facing medical students with different academic performance (GPA) (N=318).

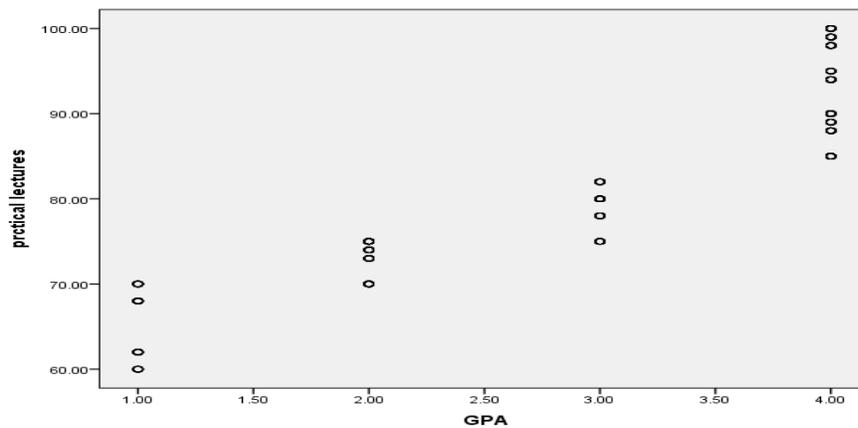
GPA	excellent n=132	very good n=63	Good n=85	Accepted n=38	p-value
<b>Academic Problems</b>	<b>mean ± SD</b>	<b>mean ± SD</b>	<b>mean ± SD</b>	<b>mean ± SD</b>	
professor	72.3±1.7	67.1±1.1	64.0±1.4	60.7± 0.8	0.001**
Course	24.3±1.9	28.3±1.9	26.0±1.7	28.7±2.2	0.002**
practical part and organization	24.8±4.5	25.7±4.0	25.4±3.5	25.4±3.7	0.5
Exams	19.9±3.3	19.2±2.8	19.0±3.3	18.1±2.3	0.01*
Equipment	19.0±3.9	19.0±2.7	18.4±2.7	18.7±3.1	0.7
Library	22.9±3.7	23.4±3.6	22.5±2.8	23.2±3.9	0.4

\*= statistical significant      \*\*= highly statistical significant      F= One Way ANOVA

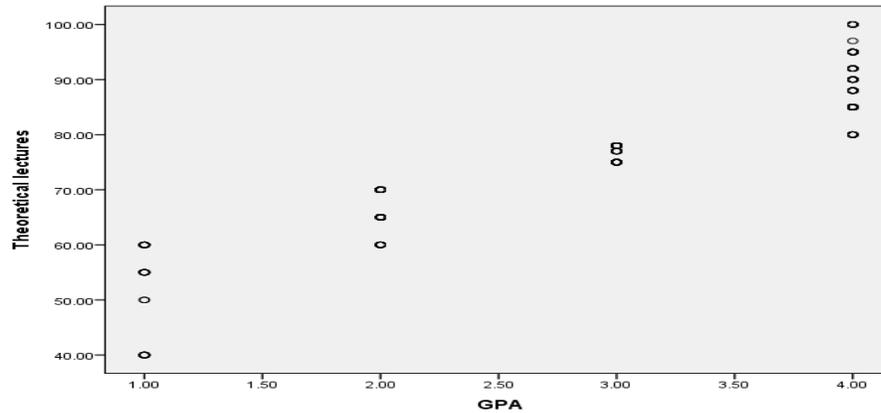
**Table (4):** Differences in lecture attendance between students with different Academic performance (GPA) (N=318).

GPA	excellent n=132	very good n=63	Good n=85	Accepted n=38	Total n=318	p-value
<b>Attendance</b>	<b>mean ± SD</b>	<b>mean ± SD</b>	<b>mean ± SD</b>	<b>mean ± SD</b>	<b>mean ± SD</b>	
Theoretical lectures	89.3±5.6	76.8±1.4	66.8±3.4	51.8±8.6	76.4±13.8	0.001**
Practical lectures	92.9±5.3	79.1±2.2	73.3±2.0	65.7±4.1	81.7 ±10.9	0.001**

\*= statistical significant      \*\*= highly statistical significant      F= One Way ANOVA



**Figure (1):** Correlation between practical lecture attendance and academic performance (GPA) in studied cases..



**Figure (2):** Correlation between theoretical lecture attendance and academic performance (GPA) in studied cases.

## Discussion:

Medical schools and other stakeholders around the world have a responsibility to ensure that tomorrow's doctors are sufficiently trained and supported to deliver essential patient care, so they directed their attention toward different challenges and academic problems facing medical education, therefore, they can improve the quality of healthcare <sup>(5)</sup>.

Recent studies on undergraduate students demonstrated different factors that have a strong influence on attendance rate, including academic and non-academic work overload pressure, psychological distress, and anxiety during examination situations. These multifactorial educational stress factors compromised the performance and professional work of the students and proved to be a substantial barrier in the accomplishment of their academic goals. However, attending lectures regularly and consistently can be an effective and satisfying stress reducer among such students <sup>(6)</sup>.

Mandatory attendance strategy was applied at Benha Faculty of Medicine at which each

student had to be present at 75% or more of the total curriculum in order to be permitted to sit for the last exam. However, during the period of our studies, the university provided facilities for students regarding the mandatory attendance of lectures, due to the panic that befell the country after the Coronavirus pandemic.

In this study, we described the relationship between academic problems and academic performance among medical students at Benha Faculty of Medicine.

In this study, we found that there were highly statistical significant differences in age and gender among the studied groups achieving different academic performance (GPA) (p value = 0.002 and 0.005 respectively) (**Table 1**). Unlikely, a study was conducted on 240 students in the spring 2016 at the University of Louisville School of Dentistry, USA, that demonstrated that there were not statistically significant regarding student's age and gender <sup>(7)</sup>. We can explain that difference as the mean age of students is greater among those who have achieved higher academic performance,

and this can be explained by the fact that the older students have acquired more experience during the past years to deal with the new integrative program than these younger ones.

The present study found that there were highly statistical significant differences in sex among the studied groups achieving different academic performance (GPA) (p value = 0.005) (**Table 1**). These results were supported by a cross-sectional study implemented and conducted in the College of Medicine at the University of Taif, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, during the academic year 2017-2018- showed that females tend to perform better than males (p<0.001) <sup>(8)</sup>.

As regards the impact of transportation time on students' performance, the current study revealed that there were highly statistical significant differences regarding distance between university and residence among the studied groups achieving different academic performance (GPA) (p value = 0.001) (**Table 1**). This finding was supported by a cross-sectional survey included all dental students actively enrolled at Faculty of Dentistry, King Abdul-Aziz University (KAU-FD), from January 2019 to June 2019- which reported that more than half of all students (51.4%) would need thirty to sixty minutes in transportation time to reach the dental school, while 16.8% would spend more than 60 minutes in transportation time to reach the dental school (p = 0.042) <sup>(9)</sup>.

Unlikely, a study that was conducted in the College of Medicine at the University of Taif, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, during the academic year 2017-2018- that clarified that students who reported longer time of transportation between home and university (>60 minutes) had higher significant GPA

compared with those with shorter time (<15 minutes; mean ranks were 214.25 and 114.83, respectively; p=0.032) <sup>(8)</sup>. This can be explained by the difficulty of means of transportation and the many obstacles facing students on their way to university from traffic congestion that aborts students' energy and wastes their time and makes them miss early lectures unlike their peers who have convenient transportation provided with amenities from home and directly to the university, allowing them that time of recreation and renewal of activity to receive study conditions.

No statistically significant relationship was found between students' performance and whether they were living with their families, with colleagues or in the University City (P= 0.061) (**Table 1**). That was parallel to the results that were published through an analytical case-control study performed at the Faculty of Medicine at Jazan University to highlight the factors that influence the academic performance of medical students<sup>10</sup>.

As demonstrated from (**Table 1**), there was highly statistically significant differences among the studied groups of different academic performance indicated by GPA in respect to history of chronic diseases (like asthma, allergy, visual impairment, hearing impairment and others), (p value = 0.001). These results were confirmed by a systematic review in which the majority of studies were conducted from January 1, 1990 until June 25, 2018. This systematic review had identified that, in general, chronic conditions were significantly associated with increased absenteeism and grade repetition which in role associated with poorer educational outcomes <sup>(11)</sup>. However, a study conducted in

the College of Medicine at the University of Taif, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, indicated that there was no statistically significant association between history of chronic diseases and academic performance ( $p$ -value=0.09)<sup>(8)</sup>.

That can be explained by the pressures of successive exams and the lack of time suffered by the students of the new integrative program, which constitutes a great burden on the psychological state of the students, and this negatively affects the health status of everyone, especially those who suffer from chronic diseases. All these pressures make them complacency in taking their medications regularly and this inevitably affects their concentration, which makes them perform weaker than the rest of their peers.

Concerning academic problems facing medical students, the present study found that there were highly statistically significant differences between the studied groups at the second, third and fourth level in relation to academic problem related to professor, that were about  $67.5 \pm 4.6$  for the fourth level, academic problems related to course that were about  $24.6 \pm 2.8$  for the fourth level ( $P=0.001$ ) and practical part problems that were about  $26.9 \pm 3.8$  for the fourth level ( $P=0.003$ ). Also, there were statistically significant differences regarding problems related to equipment that were about  $19.8 \pm 2.9$  for the fourth level ( $P=0.03$ ) (**Table 2**). This finding was agreed with a retrospective study conducted within the male section, Department of Respiratory Care, College of Applied Sciences, Almaarefa Colleges for Science & Technology, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia<sup>(12)</sup> and a study conducted in Green Life Medical College, Bangladesh- that considered the qualities of

professors, their practices, and the relationship they have with their students appears to play a role in non-attendance to lectures<sup>(13)</sup>.

This finding was also in line with a descriptive cross-sectional study that targeted 135 student nurses during the duration from January 2018 to May 2018 in the Nursing school of The University of Lahore, Pakistan. The study showed that there was a statistically significant difference in the academic level in relation to academic problem related to professor ( $P=0.0001$ )<sup>(14)</sup>.

In concern to academic problems related to practical part, the present study showed highly statistically significant differences between the studied groups at different levels ( $P=0.003$ ) (**Table 2**), which was supported by a study conducted on 432 dental students at Jordan University Hospital, at the end of scholastic year 2019–2020 ( $p = 0.008$ )- when proved that the difference in clinical training problems was statistically significant between the 4th and 5th academic year<sup>(15)</sup>.

Concerning academic problems related to course, a descriptive cross-sectional study that was performed in the Nursing school of The University of Lahore, Pakistan, had also proved the statistically significant difference among different academic levels ( $P=0.02$ ), that was similarly to the findings of the present study ( $P=0.001$ )<sup>(14)</sup>.

Furthermore, results of this study (**Table 2**) indicated that there were no significant differences among the studied groups at the second, third and fourth level concerning academic problems related to exams ( $P=0.13$ ). unlikely, a study was conducted at the College of Nursing and Minia University Hospitals, on 200 students in the 2015-2016

academic years- that revealed that there were highly statistically significant differences among the studied groups at different academic levels ( $P= 0.001$ )<sup>(16)</sup>.

We believe that the main reason that can explain this difference is that different academic years are subjected to the same pressure caused by successive exams. This is the result of the unification of the examination system for everyone and the reliance on objectivity in the development of exams. As well as the application of the automated exams to everyone after the opening of the examination center of the university in pursuit of upgrading the educational system and achieving justice for all.

A post-exam survey have been conducted on a cohort of 60 students of a newly formed medical school utilizing an organ systems-based approach to exams using the National Board of Medical Education's (NBME)- to evaluate medical students for resource usage, student-perceived preparedness, and exam performance for the analysis of how examinees compare to the performance of medical schools throughout the USA- showed that no significant differences in performance were observed when comparing any individual resource use to non-use. Also, there was no correlation between number of resources and average performance, ( $p=0.87$ )<sup>(17)</sup>.

This finding was agreed with the present study, which showed that there were no statistical significant differences between the studied groups achieving different academic performance (GPA) regarding academic problems related to organization, equipment and library (**Table 3**) ( $P= 0.5, 0.7, 0.4$

respectively). However, these findings were not matched with a cross-sectional survey targeted 562 students in Sohar University in Oman, revealed that there is a significant relationship between institution environments and student's performance ( $P=0.000$ )<sup>(18)</sup>. This can be explained by the fact that most of the students participating in the study unanimously agreed that despite the weakness of the college's resources, they are distributed equitably to all students regardless of their academic performance.

The current study revealed that there were highly statistical significant differences between the studied groups achieving different academic performance (GPA) regarding theoretical lecture attendance that were about  $51.8\pm 8.6$  for students achieved accepted GPA, while it was about  $89.3\pm 5.6$  for those who achieved excellent GPA ( $P=0.001$ ). Also the differences respecting lecture practical attendance were highly statistical significant that were about  $65.7\pm 4.1$  for students achieved accepted GPA and about  $92.9\pm 5.3$  for those who achieved excellent GPA ( $P=0.001$ ), (**Table 4**). These results were matched to another study was conducted in Malaysia, in April 2018 - had observed that there was a significant difference between the final examination marks scored by students who attended the class more than 80% and those who attended the class less than 80%. Students- who are present in class more than 80% from their total contact hours- have higher mean score compared to the students with less than 80% class attendance ( $P=0.033$ )<sup>(19)</sup>.

Regarding the correlation between attendance rates and academic performance, this study supported that there was highly statistically

significant strong positive correlation between theoretical and lecture practical attendance and academic performance (GPA) ( $p=0.001$ ), (**Figure 1,2**), which was in line with a study was conducted among all 251 students who were enrolled in a statistical course at UiTM Terengganu Kuala Terengganu Campus, during the period from December 2016 to March 2017 ( $P = 0.008$ )<sup>(19)</sup>. These results were also matched with a retrospective descriptive cross-sectional study- has been conducted on 331 undergraduate medical students during their surgical clerkships at the College of Medicine and Medical Sciences (CMMS) at Arabian Gulf University (AGU), Bahrain- from September 2018 to June 2020, ( $P = 0.01$ )<sup>(20)</sup>.

### **Conclusion:**

The results of the present study showed that there was significant strong positive correlation between theoretical and practical lecture attendance, and academic performance (GPA). This study, also, showed that the majority of students attended the clinical practice while the absenteeism percentage was higher in theoretical lectures.

Moreover, the current study, showed that there were significant differences regarding academic problems related to professor, course, practical part, and equipment facing medical students, while there were no significant differences among the studied groups at the second, third and fourth level regarding academic problems related to exams and library.

Significant differences between the studied groups achieved different academic performance (GPA) regarding academic problems related to professor, course and

academic problems related to exams- were demonstrated through the study.

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