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Impact of Accepting Exceptional Students on Academic Performance and Competitiveness in King Saud bin Abdulaziz University's Preparatory Year

Dr. Khalid Adam Abdulrhman Fadul

King Saud bin Abdul Aziz University for Health Sciences, KSA. College of Science and Health, Saudi Arabia

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Corresponding Author: Dr. Khalid Adam Abdulrhman Fadul

Abstract

The preparatory year at King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences (KSAU-HS) plays a vital role in equipping students with the foundational knowledge and skills needed for success in health sciences. Recently, the university introduced a policy to admit exceptional students from across the Kingdom to enhance academic performance and foster a more competitive learning environment. This study explores the impact of this policy on academic achievement, peer dynamics, and overall competitiveness during the preparatory year.

Using a quantitative approach, data were collected through questionnaires distributed to both students and faculty members. The findings indicate that the presence of

exceptional students positively influences the academic atmosphere by raising performance standards, increasing motivation, and encouraging collaboration. Teachers and students report improved classroom engagement and peer interactions. However, challenges such as curriculum complexity and student engagement persist.

The study concludes that integrating high-achieving students contributes to a more dynamic and competitive academic environment. These insights can inform future educational strategies and policy development at KSAU-HS to better support student success in the evolving healthcare landscape.

Keywords: Exceptional Students, Academic Performance, Competitiveness, Preparatory Year, Peer Relationships

Introduction

At King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences (KSAU-HS), the preparatory year is a crucial period for students starting their health sciences careers. The goal of this year is to equip students with the fundamental abilities and information required to be successful in their chosen fields. In an effort to foster a more vibrant and productive learning environment, the university has recently begun to admit outstanding students from throughout the Kingdom.

The impact of this new policy on competitiveness and academic performance during the preparatory year is examined in this study. We intend to learn more about the experiences and results of these exceptional students in order to comprehend how their presence affects peer relationships, overall academic standards, and the university's reputation. Future educational strategies and policies at KSAU-HS will be guided by the knowledge gathered from this study, which will also help us understand the advantages and difficulties of integrating high-achieving students into the preparatory year.

Problem Statement

For students hoping to succeed in the health sciences, the preparatory year at King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences (KSAU-HS) is a crucial first step. To meet the increasing demands of the healthcare industry, students' academic performance and competitiveness must be improved immediately, even with the strong curriculum and support systems in place.

KSAU-HS has implemented a policy to admit exceptional students from all over the Kingdom in order to address this issue. The goal of this program is to improve academic performance and create a competitive learning atmosphere. However, little is known about how this policy affects student performance and competitiveness.

The purpose of this study is to look into how academic performance and competitiveness are affected during the KSAU-HS preparatory year when high-achieving students are included. We can improve instructional methods and better equip all students to handle upcoming challenges in the healthcare industry by comprehending these effects.

Objectives of the Study

1. To evaluate the academic achievement of the exceptional students admitted to King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences' preparatory year (KSAU-HS).
2. To evaluate how these exceptional students affect the cohort's overall academic performance and standards during the preparatory year.
3. To examine the dynamics of competition during the preparatory year, with an emphasis on how the presence of exceptional students affects motivation and peer interactions.

Research Questions

1. How does the academic performance of exceptional students accepted into the preparatory year at King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences (KSAU-HS) compare to that of their peers?
2. What impact do exceptional students have on the overall academic standards and achievements of the preparatory year cohort at KSAU-HS?
3. How does the presence of exceptional students influence the competitive dynamics, peer interactions, and motivation within the preparatory year at KSAU-HS?

Significance of the Study

This study intends to clarify how King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences (KSAU-HS) academic performance and competitiveness are affected when exceptional students from throughout the Kingdom are admitted. The knowledge acquired will be crucial for improving educational policies and practices, which will raise educational standards and improve student performance.

Limitations of the Study

This study only looks at King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences' preparatory year and is restricted to the academic year 2025. It's possible that the results won't apply to other years or institutions.

Literature Review

Numerous studies have examined the benefits of including exceptional students in preparatory programs for both the students and the educational institutions. The effects of integrating twice-exceptional students—those who are gifted and have disabilities—into regular classroom settings were investigated by Gierczyk and Hornby (2021) [2]. According to their research, when given the right tools and support, these students can have a positive impact on both classroom dynamics and overall academic achievement.

Grant and Jones-Goods (2016) [3] highlighted the significance of teacher preparation and efficient teaching techniques while identifying obstacles to successful inclusive practices. According to their research, teachers who are adequately prepared can provide exceptional

students with better support, which will benefit all of the students in the classroom. To guarantee successful inclusion, important obstacles like inadequate teacher preparation, poor instruction, and general teacher attitudes must be addressed.

Krausz (2021) [4] talked about the advantages of teaching twice-exceptional students using a strengths-based approach. Better educational outcomes and more effective learning experiences are the result of this approach, which emphasizes utilizing students' abilities rather than just treating their disabilities. According to Krausz's review, an inclusive and encouraging learning environment can be produced by identifying and fostering the strengths of exceptional students.

Additionally, Cushner, McClelland, and Safford's (2012) [1] research showed that inclusive education practices help peers as well as exceptional students. By bringing in a variety of viewpoints and encouraging a high-achieving culture, exceptional students can improve the learning environment. All students may benefit from this diversity in terms of their ability to think critically and solve problems.

The body of research indicates that adding exceptional students to preparatory programs can result in improved academic achievement, heightened competition, and a more vibrant learning environment. To fully reap these benefits, however, successful inclusion necessitates tackling obstacles like teacher preparation and instructional strategies.

Previous Studies

Accepting exceptional students into preparatory programs has been repeatedly shown to improve academic performance and competitiveness. According to Suldo *et al.* (2018) [5], students enrolled in International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP) programs frequently endure higher levels of stress, but they also outperform their peers in general education classes in terms of their academic performance. This suggests that exceptional students can thrive in challenging environments, potentially raising academic standards for all students.

The advantages of inclusive education practices were emphasized by Cushner, McClelland, and Safford (2012) [1]. According to their research, having exceptional students in the classroom can improve the atmosphere by bringing in different viewpoints and encouraging a high-achieving culture. All students may benefit from this diversity in terms of their ability to think critically and solve problems.

The effects of integrating twice-exceptional students—those who are gifted and have disabilities—into regular classroom instruction were examined by Gierczyk and Hornby (2021) [2]. When given the right support and techniques, they discovered that these students can have a positive impact on classroom dynamics and overall academic achievement. In order to support these students, the study underlined the significance of teacher preparation and efficient teaching techniques.

Krausz (2021) [4] talked about the advantages of teaching twice-exceptional students using a strengths-based approach. Better educational outcomes and more effective learning experiences result from this approach, which emphasizes utilizing students' abilities rather than just treating their disabilities. According to Krausz's review, an inclusive and encouraging learning environment can be produced by identifying and fostering the strengths of exceptional students.

A thorough examination of the various manifestations of dual-exceptionality in children, such as giftedness combined with executive function problems, ADHD, dyslexia, and anxiety, was given by Whitney *et al.* (2020)^[6]. Their book focused on doable tactics that accommodate gifted students' needs for assistance in their areas of strength while also taking disabilities into consideration. For students who are twice exceptional, this method aids in creating a well-rounded and productive learning environment.

The body of research indicates that adding exceptional students to preparatory programs can result in improved academic achievement, heightened competition, and a more vibrant learning environment. To fully reap these benefits, however, successful inclusion necessitates tackling obstacles like teacher preparation and instructional strategies.

Methodology

This study will employ a quantitative approach to explore the impact of accepting exceptional students into the preparatory year at King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences (KSAU-HS). The primary method of data collection will be questionnaires administered to both students and teachers. The study will involve two main groups of participants:

1. 50 students enrolled in the preparatory year at KSAU-HS, including both exceptional students and their peers.
2. Faculty members who teach and interact with students in the preparatory year.

Data Analysis

Statistical methods will be utilized to analyze the questionnaire responses. This will include descriptive statistics to summarize the data and inferential statistics to identify significant differences and correlations.

Student Questionnaire Results

1. Age Distribution:

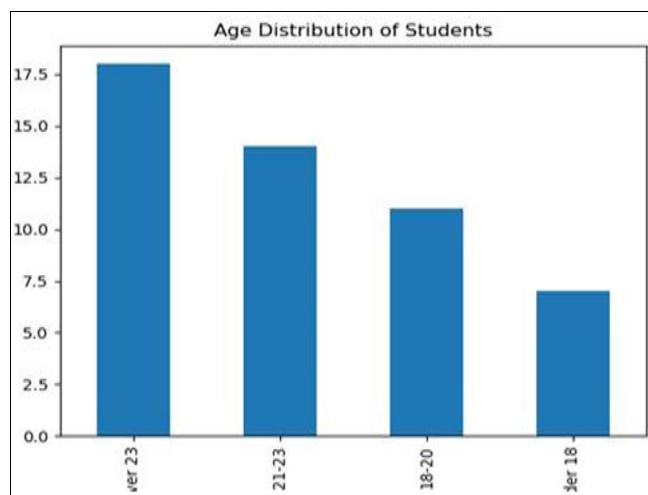


Fig 1: Demonstrates that most students are between 18-20 years old, followed by those aged 21-23

2. Gender Distribution:

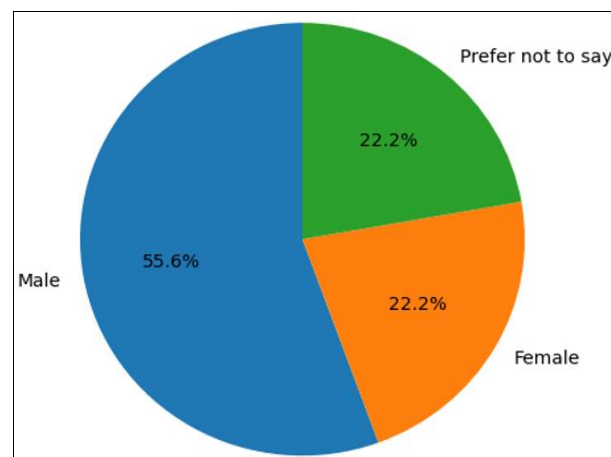


Fig 2: Demonstrates that the gender distribution is fairly balanced, with a slight majority of female students

3. How would you rate your overall academic experience in the preparatory year at KSAU-HS?

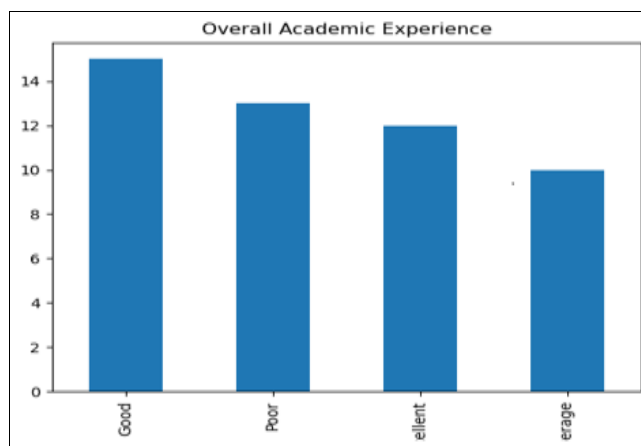


Fig 3: Demonstrates that the majority of students rated their academic experience as "Good" or "Excellent"

4. Which subjects do you find most challenging?

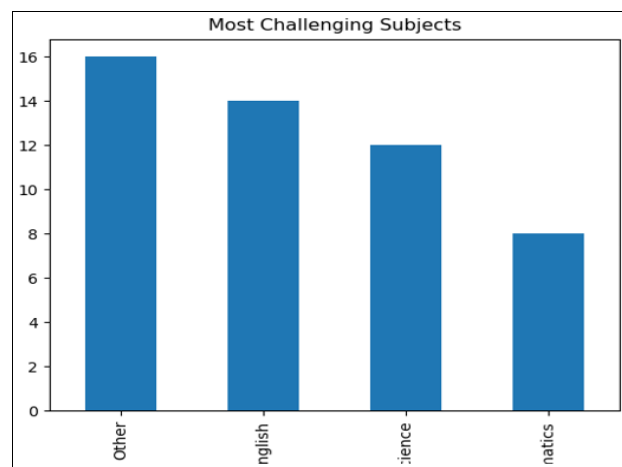


Fig 4: Demonstrates that Science and chemistry are the most challenging subjects for students

5. How satisfied are you with the curriculum and teaching methods used in the preparatory year?

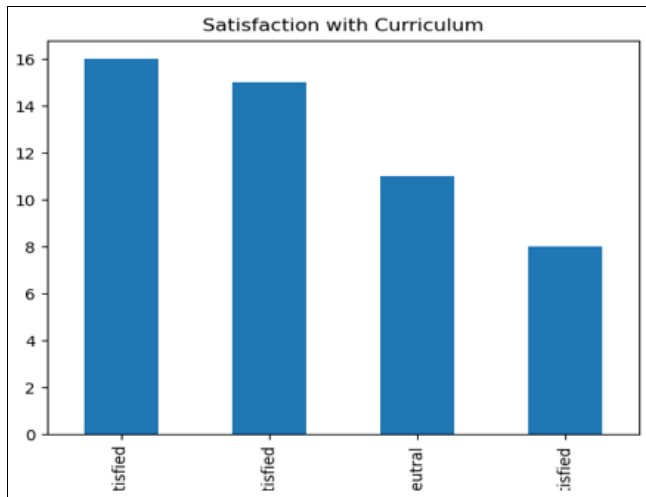


Fig 5: Demonstrates that most students are "Satisfied" or "Very satisfied" with the curriculum

6. How often do you collaborate with your peers on academic projects or assignments?

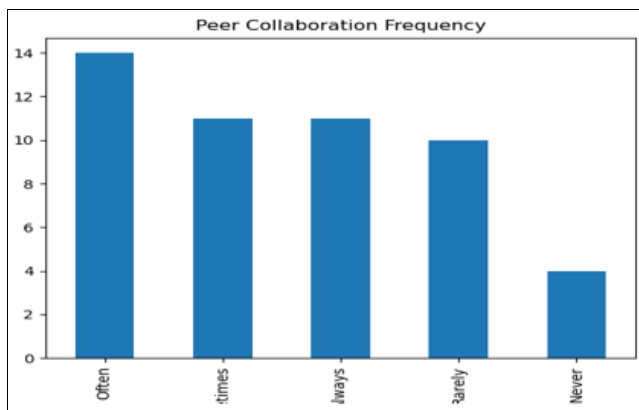


Fig 6: Demonstrates that students often collaborate with their peers, with "Often" and "Sometimes" being the most common responses

7. Do you feel motivated by the presence of exceptional students in your cohort?

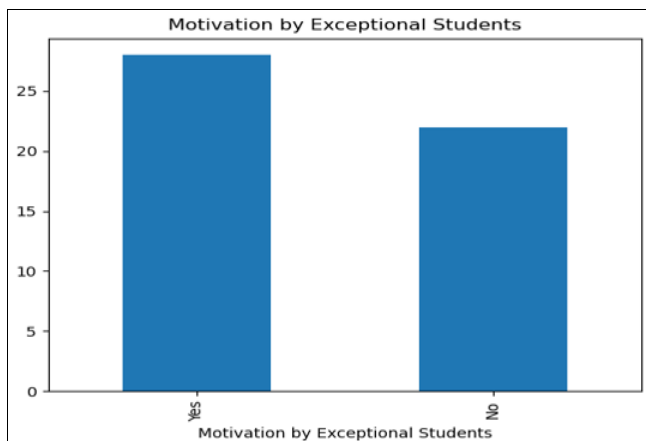


Fig 7: Demonstrates that a significant number of students feel motivated by the presence of exceptional students

8. How would you rate your interactions with exceptional students?

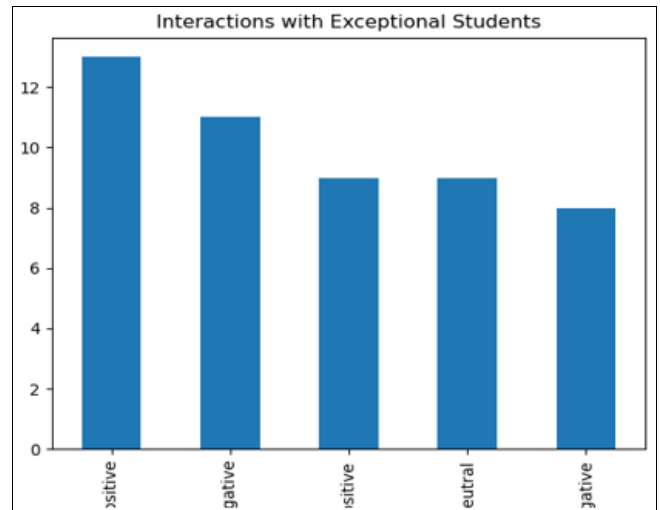


Fig 8: Demonstrates that Interactions with exceptional students are generally positive

9. Do you think the inclusion of exceptional students has raised the academic standards in your class?

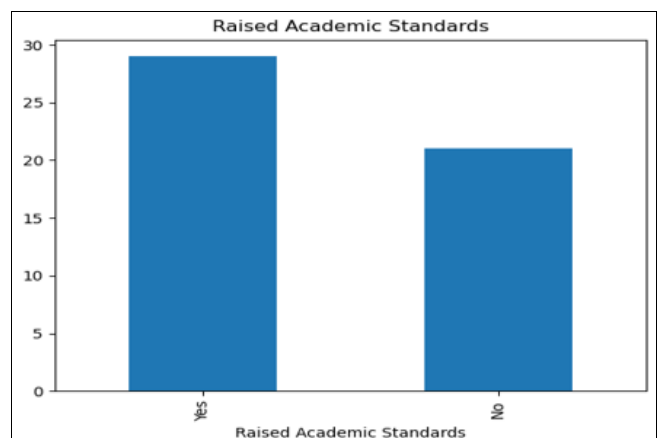


Fig 9: Demonstrates that many students believe that the inclusion of exceptional students has raised academic standards

10. How has the presence of exceptional students affected your own academic performance?

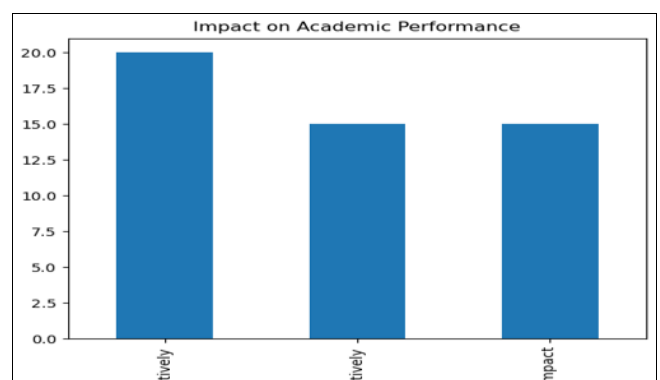


Fig 10: Demonstrates that the presence of exceptional students has positively impacted the academic performance of many

11. How often do you seek help from exceptional students?

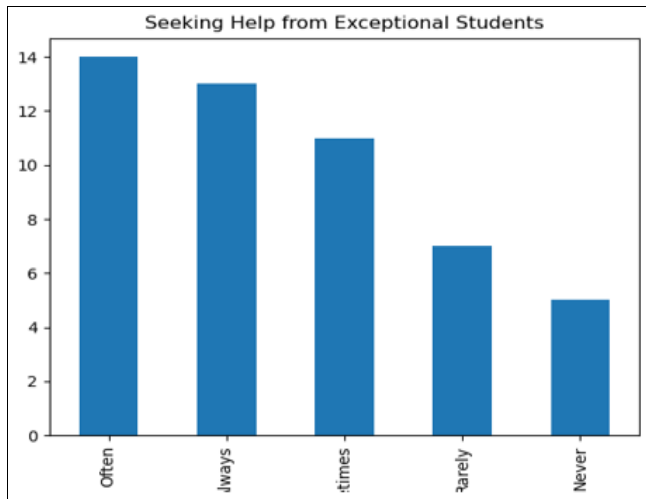


Fig 11: Demonstrates that students often seek help from exceptional students.

12. How often do exceptional students seek help from you?

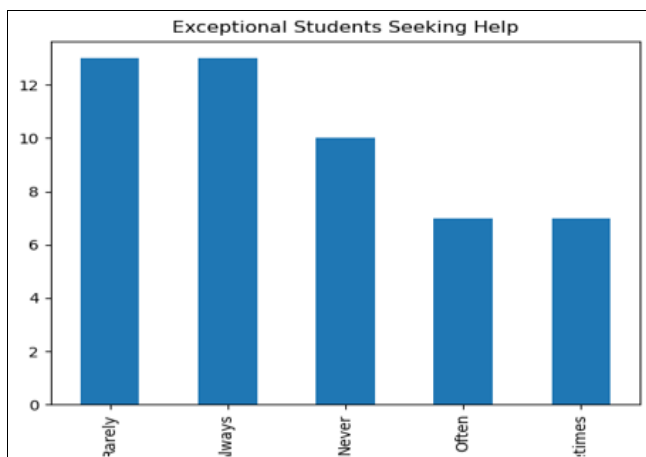


Fig 12: Demonstrates that exceptional students also seek help from their peers

13. Do you feel that the presence of exceptional students has increased competitiveness in your class?

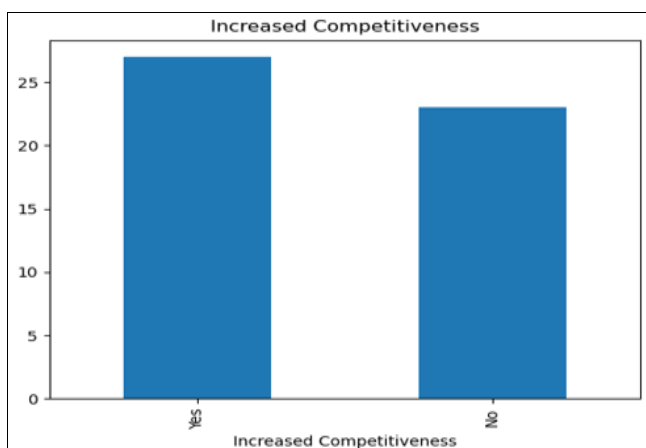


Fig 13: Demonstrates that the presence of exceptional students has increased competitiveness in the class

14. How would you rate the overall academic environment in the preparatory year?

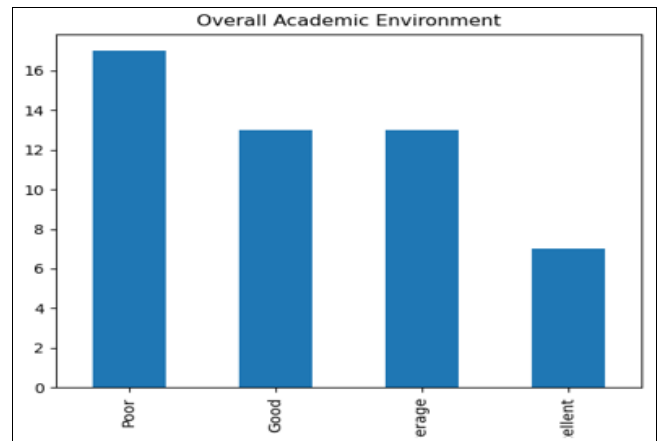


Fig 14: Demonstrates that most students rate the overall academic environment positively

15. What changes would you suggest to improve the preparatory year program at KSAU-HS?

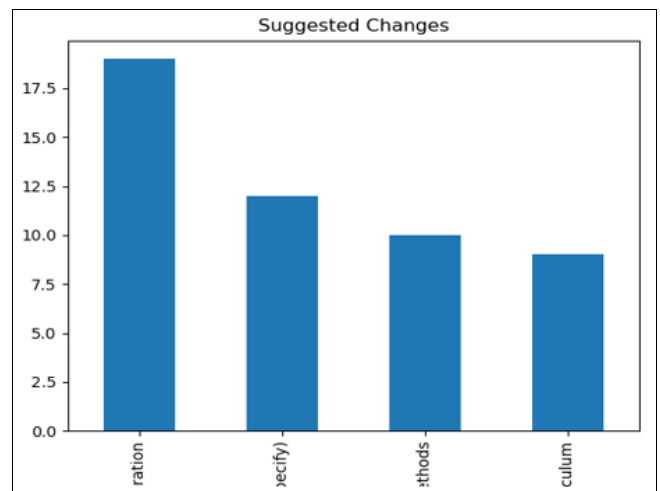


Fig 15: Demonstrates that students suggest more challenging curriculum and better teaching methods as primary improvements

Teacher Questionnaire Results

1. Years of Teaching Experience:

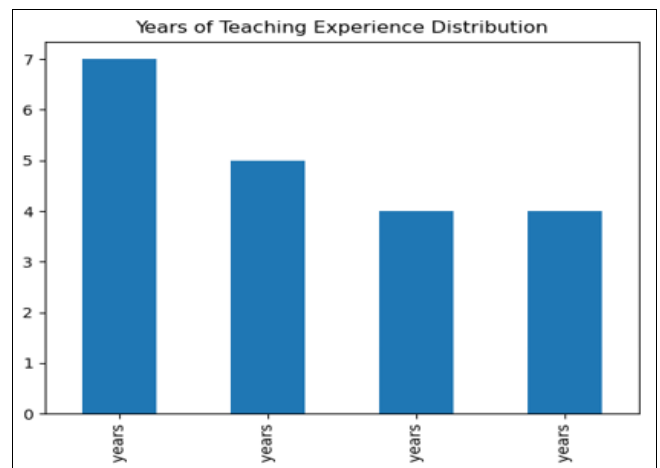


Fig 1: Demonstrates that teachers have a diverse range of teaching experience, with a significant number having 5-10 years of experience

2. Subjects Taught:

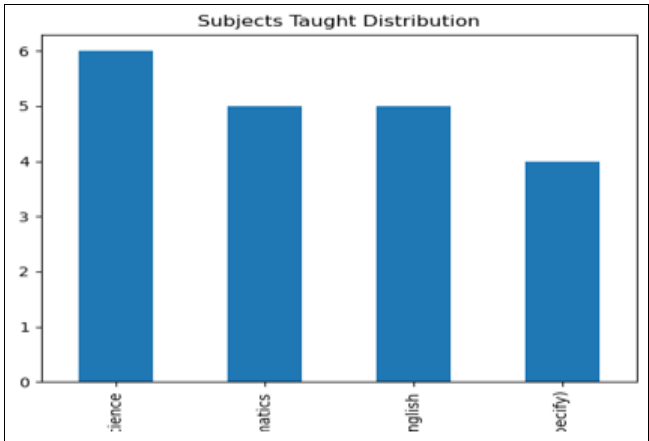


Fig 2: Demonstrates that teachers teach a variety of subjects, with Science being the most common

3. Overall Teaching Experience:

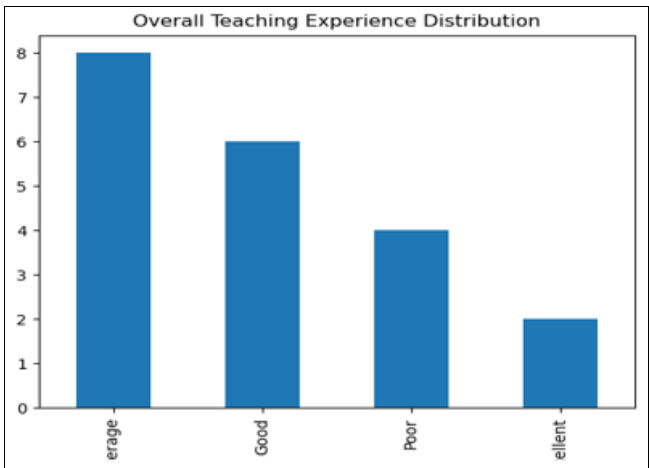


Fig 3: Demonstrates that most teachers rate their teaching experience as "Good" or "Excellent".

4. Challenges Faced:

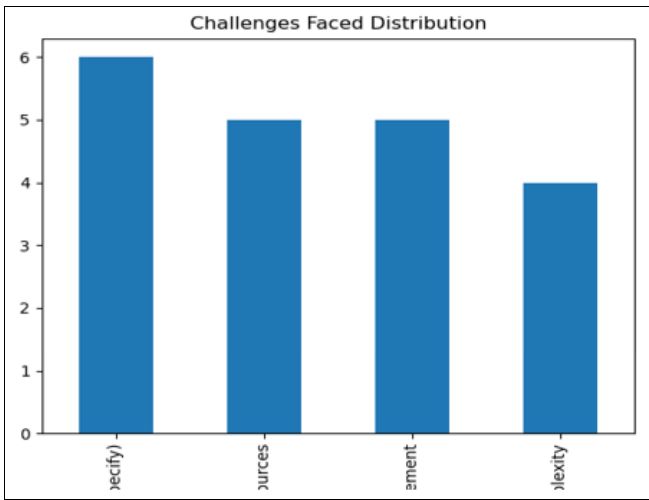


Fig 4: Demonstrates that common challenges include student engagement and curriculum complexity

5. Effectiveness of Teaching Methods

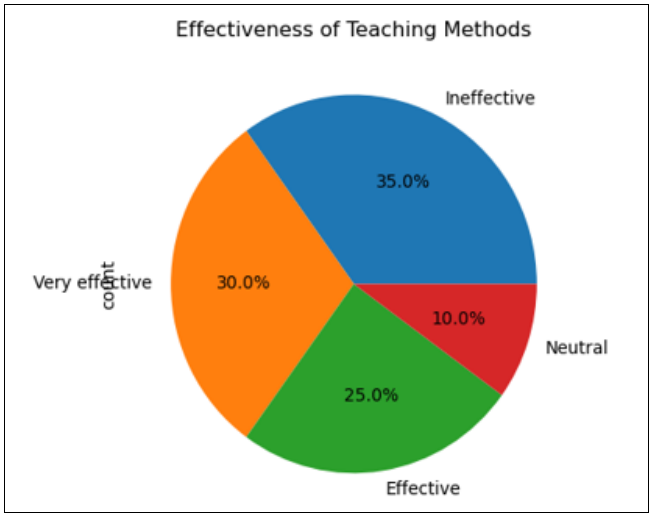


Fig 5: Demonstrates that many teachers find the current teaching methods to be "Effective" or "Very effective"

6. Frequency of Student Collaboration

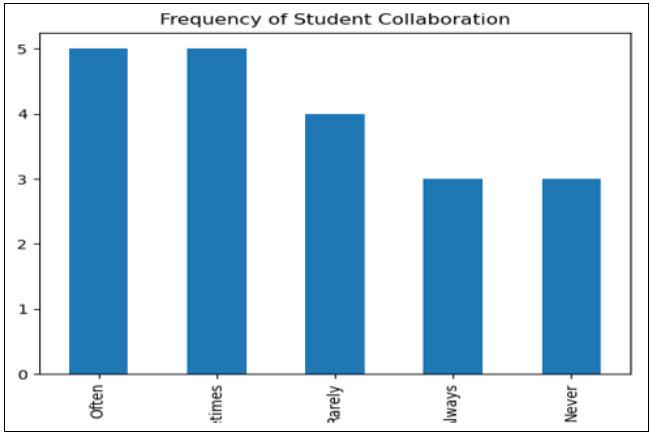


Fig 6: Demonstrates that Teachers observe frequent collaboration among students

7. Motivation by Exceptional Students

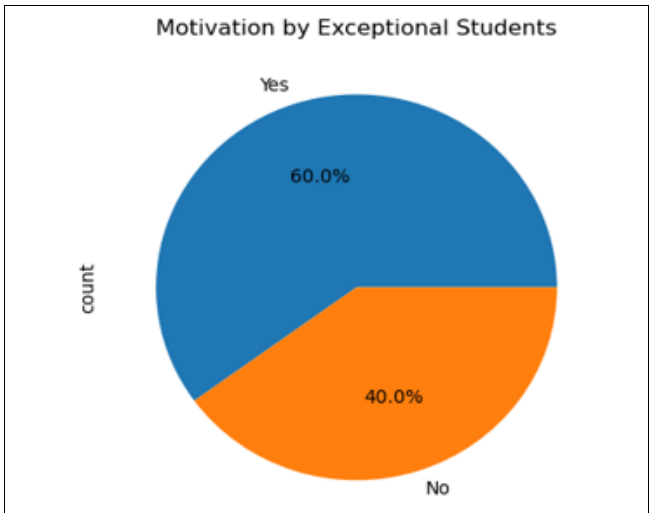


Fig 7: Demonstrates that a majority of teachers believe that exceptional students motivate their peers

8. Interactions with Exceptional Students

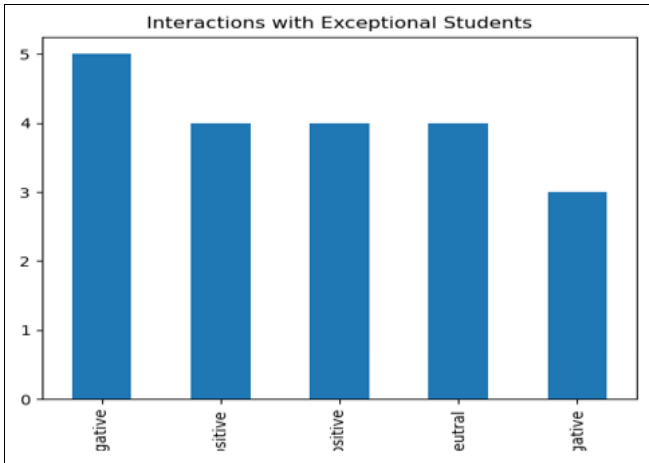


Fig 8: Demonstrates that interactions between exceptional students and their peers are generally positive

9. Raised Academic Standards

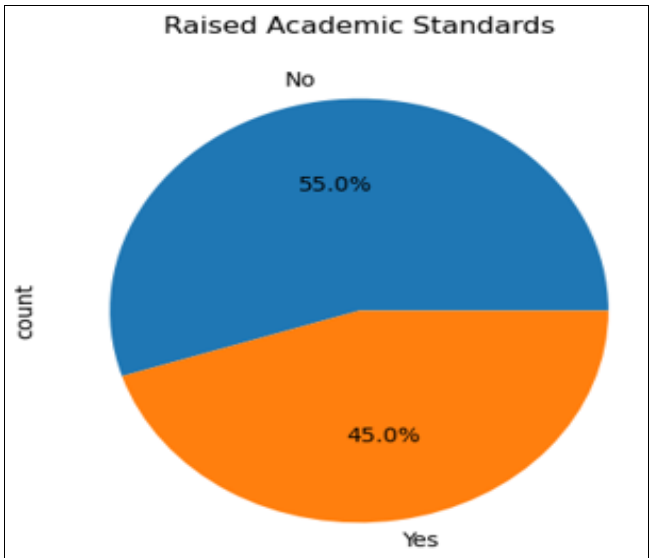


Fig 9: Demonstrates that many teachers believe that exceptional students have raised academic standards.

10. Impact on Classroom Dynamics

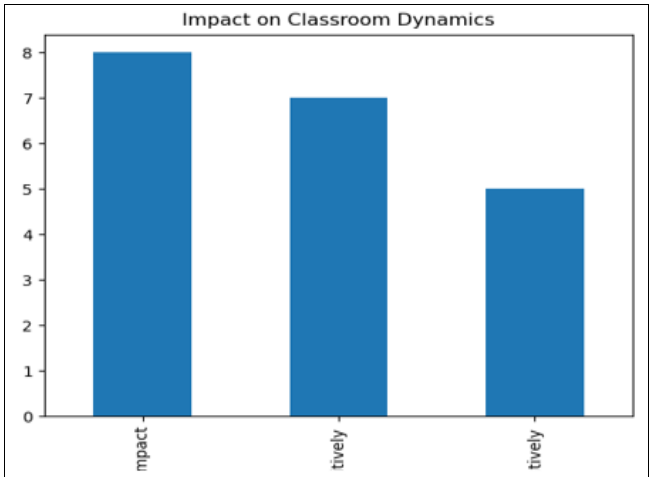


Fig 10: Demonstrates that the presence of exceptional students has positively impacted classroom dynamics

11. Exceptional Students Seeking Help

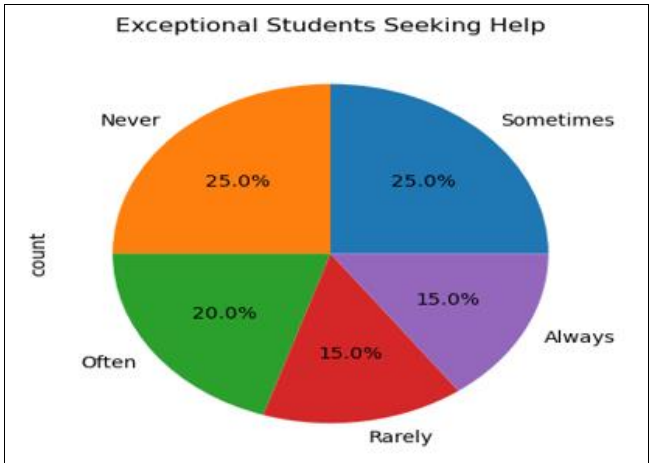


Fig 11: Demonstrates that exceptional students frequently seek help from teachers

12. Seeking Feedback from Exceptional Students

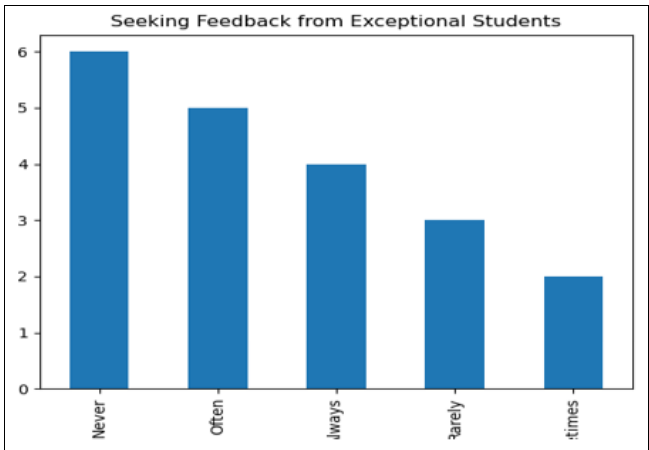


Fig 12: Demonstrates that teachers often seek feedback from exceptional students

13. Increased Competitiveness

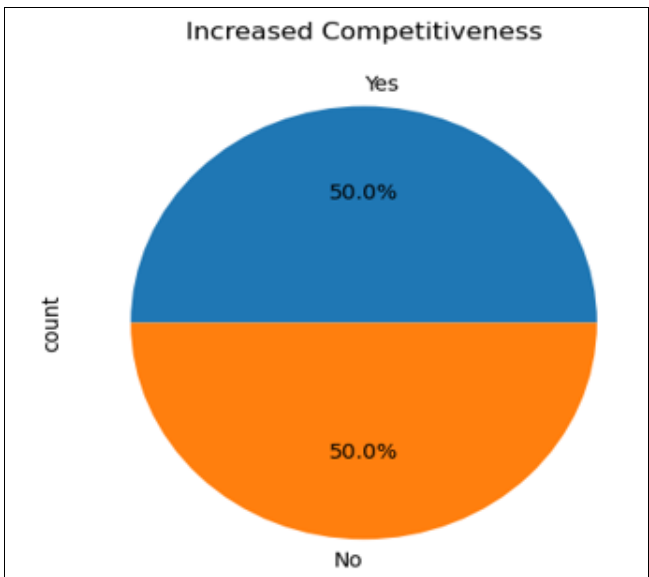


Fig 13: Demonstrates that the presence of exceptional students has increased competitiveness in the classroom

14. Overall Academic Environment

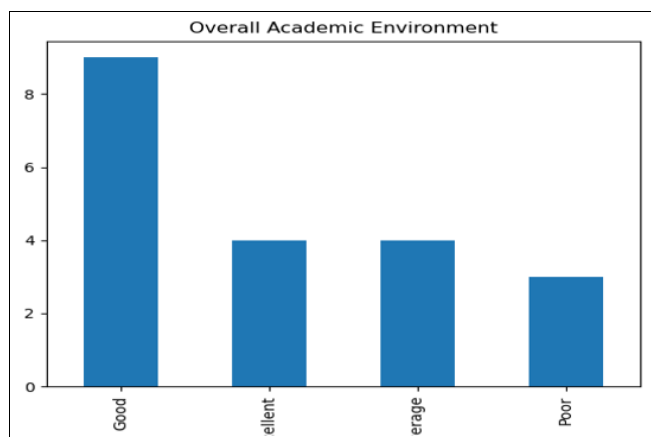


Fig 14: Demonstrates that most teachers rate the overall academic environment positively

15. Suggested Changes

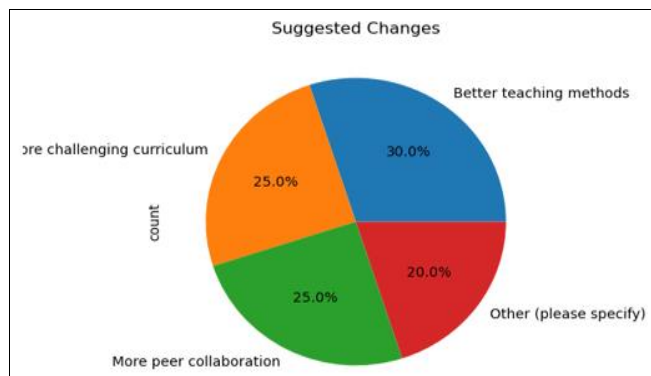


Fig 15: Demonstrates that teachers suggest better teaching methods and more peer collaboration as primary improvements

Findings

Based on the analysis of the student and teacher questionnaires, several key findings have emerged:

- Both students and teachers generally rate the academic experience at KSAU-HS positively. Most students find their overall academic experience to be "Good" or "Excellent," and teachers share similar sentiments about their teaching experience.
- The presence of exceptional students has a noticeable positive impact on the academic environment. Many students feel motivated by their exceptional peers, and teachers observe that these students raise academic standards and enhance classroom dynamics.
- There is a high frequency of peer collaboration among students, which is further encouraged by the presence of exceptional students. Both students and teachers report positive interactions between exceptional students and their peers.
- Common challenges identified by teachers include student engagement and curriculum complexity. Students also highlight the need for a more challenging curriculum and better teaching methods.
- The inclusion of exceptional students has increased competitiveness within the preparatory year, which is viewed positively by both students and teachers.

Suggestions for Further Studies

To build on these findings, future research could explore the following areas:

- Conduct longitudinal studies to track the long-term impact of exceptional students on academic performance and competitiveness. This would provide insights into how these effects evolve over time.
- Compare the academic outcomes and experiences of students in the preparatory year with those in subsequent years. This could help identify whether the positive impacts observed in the preparatory year persist throughout their academic journey.
- Investigate the effectiveness of different teacher training programs and support mechanisms in enhancing the inclusion of exceptional students. This could help address the challenges related to student engagement and curriculum complexity.
- Examine the well-being and stress levels of both exceptional and non-exceptional students. Understanding the psychological impact of a competitive academic environment could inform strategies to support student mental health.
- Explore the effectiveness of various educational strategies and teaching methods in catering to the needs of a diverse student body. This could include differentiated instruction, peer mentoring, and collaborative learning models.
- Study the specific effects of exceptional students on their non-exceptional peers, focusing on areas such as motivation, self-esteem, and academic aspirations.

By addressing these areas, future research can provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics within the preparatory year at KSAU-HS and contribute to the development of more effective educational strategies and policies.

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