IMPACT OF ADVANCED EXCEL TRAINING ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND EMPLOYABILITY

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of advanced excel training on students' academic performance and employability, focusing on their impact on academic performance, skill development, and employability. Using a quantitative research approach with data collected from 105 students through structured surveys, the analysis reveals significant improvements in students' data handling, analytical abilities, and presentation skills. The findings highlight that advanced Excel training enhances proficiency in quantitative subjects, boosts job placement rates, and meets the growing industry demand for data-driven decision-making skills. The study underscores the need to integrate practical, industry-relevant Excel training into academic curricula to prepare students for competitive professional environments.

Keywords: Advanced Excel, Data Analysis, Academic Performance, Employability, Skill Development, Data Visualization, Quantitative Research, Microsoft Excel, Professional Training, Curriculum Development

Introduction

In today's data-driven world, proficiency in advanced data analysis tools is crucial for academic success and professional growth. Microsoft Excel, as one of the most versatile and widely used software applications, plays a pivotal role in data management, analysis, and visualization across various industries. While basic Excel skills are commonly taught, the increasing complexity of data-centric tasks demands a deeper understanding of advanced Excel functionalities. This study focuses on the benefits of advanced Excel classes for students, aiming to evaluate how specialized training enhances their academic performance, analytical capabilities, and employability prospects. Advanced Excel techniques, such as complex formula writing, data validation, pivot tables, conditional formatting, and automation using VBA, empower students to handle large datasets efficiently, perform sophisticated analyses, and present insights effectively. The research highlights the growing demand for Excel proficiency in diverse fields like finance, marketing, healthcare, and supply chain management. By bridging the gap between basic Excel knowledge and advanced analytical skills, this study seeks to provide insights into the role of advanced Excel training in preparing students for data-driven academic projects and competitive job markets.

Literature Review

Rose Ann DiMaria-Ghalili, 2009

This article describes the authors' experiences during 3 years of using Microsoft Excel® to teach graduate-level statistics, as part of the research core required by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing for all professional graduate nursing programs. The advantages to using this program instead of specialized statistical programs are ease of accessibility, increased transferability of skills, and reduced cost for students. The authors share their insight about realistic goals for teaching statistics to master's-level students and

the resources that are available to faculty to help them to learn and use Excel in their courses. Several online sites that are excellent resources for both faculty and students are discussed. Detailed attention is given to an online course (Carnegie-Mellon University Open Learning Initiative, n.d.), which the authors have incorporated into their graduate- level research methods course.

Veronda F. Willis 2016

The Pathways Commission Report, this teaching note describes an instructional project that allows students to learn new functions in Microsoft Excel. While this project is used in a small undergraduate Accounting Information Systems course, it can be used in larger classes and in any class where students learn technology. In addition to strengthening their understanding of Excel, students are given an opportunity to communicate their understanding of Excel via peer teaching. Since accountants use Excel frequently, students need to be exposed to the vast array of functions and capabilities in Excel in order to enhance student success in the accounting profession. Students enter the course with varying degrees of Excel experience potentially making teaching and developing projects that meet the needs of all students a daunting and challenging task. This paper explains how the experience level problem is overcome in order to help students learn Excel in an environment that not only allows them to learn how to use selected Excel skills but also allows them to learn why and when these skills are useful for accountants.

Michin Hong & David Kondrat 2022

This study discusses how Excel program can improve attitudes toward statistics among undergraduate social work students in the context of experiential learning. According to the experiential learning approach, instructors can take diverse teaching techniques such as learning by doing, simulating, and participating in activities to maximize students' learning. The researchers used Microsoft Excel as a statistical analysis software program to increase students' engagement and participations in an undergraduate statistics course.

Phillips, Simone 2008

This is a study of high achieving students using information about gifted students that can apply to and benefit all students. This article places focus on the highly motivated student that is intrinsically motivated, persistently works hard, and achieves top grades, but may not qualify as "gifted". For example, Jonathan has an average IQ as a second grade student. However, he possesses the interest and aptitude necessary to participate in fifth grade reading. Susan, a sixth grade student, has a voracious appetite for reading and excels in mathematics. She has met all of the requirements for grade-level math and shows the willingness and ability to learn more, but her school's curriculum does not offer advanced opportunities in the subject, such as pre-algebra. This article suggests that programs targeting students at extreme top and bottom levels displace a much greater need: the assurance that students are motivated to accelerate in areas of individual interest and aptitude.

David Iortuhwa Takor 2022

This study examined effect of Ms-Excel spreadsheet technology on senior secondary two students' achievement and retention in quadratic function graphs in Education Zone C Benue State, Nigeria. The study employed a quasi-experimental, nonrandomized pre-test post-test control group design. A sample of 302 SS 2 students from two schools in Benue education zone C were selected from a population of 10,918 SS 2 students for the study using purposive sampling technique. Data were collected using Quadratic Function Achievement Test (QFAT) and Quadratic Function Retention Test (QFRT) instruments. The instruments were validated by five experts, two in Mathematics Education, one in Measurement and Evaluation and two Mathematics teachers. The reliability of QFAT was 0.82. Research questions were answered using mean, standard deviations and percentages (scatter gram) while hypotheses were tested using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the study showed among others, that SS2 students taught quadratic function graphs using Ms-Excel spreadsheet technology improved more on their achievement and retention with no gender difference. Among suggestions made were, the need to create awareness among Mathematics teachers, Mathematics educators and curriculum planners to integrate Ms-Excel spreadsheet in particular and ICT in general as a teaching strategy in Mathematics teaching and learning process.

McCloskey, Donna W 2013

Business educators are struggling with how better to engage their students in the learning process. At the same time, stakeholders are reporting that business students are ill prepared in problem solving techniques and the effective use of spreadsheets. The systemic use of Excel as a teaching tool in the business curriculum may be the answer to both situations. This paper reviews how computer literacy (with a particular focus on spreadsheets) is addressed in a sample of AACSB accredited business schools. Three models are discerned and discussed. We then follow with an examination of how business faculties are using spreadsheets as a means of student engagement. The results of the literature search in this area are summarized and discussed. The paper concludes with recommendations and directions for future research and curriculum development.

C. Bruce Warner 2001

Many instructors use specialized statistics packages, such as SPSS or SAS/STAT in teaching quantitative and research methods courses. As an alternative to the specialized packages, Microsoft Excel™ offers charting capabilities and the Analysis ToolPak, which provides a set of data analysis tools beyond those normally found in spreadsheets. With Analysis ToolPak, Excel resembles what one would expect from a specialized low-level statistics program. We have successfully integrated Excel into our introductory statistics courses and developed a tutorial manual to guide students through various statistical procedures in Excel. We present student ratings of an intermediate form of the manual and its exercises and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using Excel rather than a specialized statistical package for teaching basic statistics.

Sarah Bee 2008 –

In a survey by Bain et al. (2002), they found that 72% of business professionals recommended teaching spreadsheet applications as part of an AIS course while only 36% of the faculty polled reported using spreadsheets in the AIS course. This gap between what professionals thought should be taught and what professors teach could lead to students beginning the work force with less than desired spreadsheet skills. The purpose of this article is to provides a scenario (teacher's electronic grade book) in which students are taught advanced Excel© skills to better prepare them for future job requirements. An added bonus of this example tutorial to instructors is an efficient, re-usable spreadsheet to make assigning students' grades easier.

Research Objectives
Primary Objectives

This research aims to assess the impact of advanced Excel skills on students' academic success and data analysis abilities. Proficiency in Excel enhances students' ability to manage, analyze, and visualize data effectively. Mastering advanced functions like pivot tables, statistical tools, and automation improves problem-solving and critical thinking. The study explores whether Excel proficiency leads to better academic performance and efficient coursework completion. Findings will highlight the role of digital literacy in modern education and student success.

Secondary Objectives
Evaluate Teaching Methods

This research aims to evaluate various teaching methods used in Excel training to determine the most effective instructional approaches for student learning. It will analyze traditional lectures, hands-on workshops, online tutorials, and interactive learning techniques to identify best practices that enhance comprehension and skill retention. By comparing these methods, the study seeks to understand which approaches maximize student engagement, improve practical application, and facilitate long-term learning. The findings will help educators design more effective Excel training programs that cater to diverse learning styles. Ultimately, this evaluation will contribute to the development of optimized teaching strategies that enhance students' proficiency and confidence in using Excel.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that may affect the generalizability of its findings. The sample size is limited, potentially not fully representing the entire student population who have undergone advanced Excel training. Sampling bias may also arise if participants are more inclined to respond due to strong opinions about the course. Additionally, self-reported data may be influenced by social desirability bias, leading respondents to overstate or understate their experiences. Time constraints may limit the scope of data collection and analysis, preventing a more comprehensive examination of factors influencing Excel proficiency. Lastly, external variables such as prior knowledge, instructor effectiveness, and access to additional learning resources were not controlled, which could impact the study's outcomes.

Research Methodology Type of Research

Quantitative Research

This study employs a quantitative research approach to assess the impact of advanced Excel training on students' academic performance and employability. Structured surveys are used to collect data from 105 students, enabling statistical analysis of trends and correlations. Descriptive statistics measure skill proficiency, while inferential tests such as chi-square and ANOVA evaluate relationships between variables. Regression analysis helps determine the predictive impact of Excel skills on academic success and career prospects. This empirical approach ensures objective, data-driven insights into the role of advanced Excel training in education and professional development.

Sources of Data

This study employs a quantitative research approach, collecting primary data through structured Google Forms surveys from 105 students who have undergone advanced Excel training. The survey gathers insights on academic performance, employability, skill development, and satisfaction with Excel education. Secondary data sources include academic journals, industry reports, and online learning platforms that highlight the demand for Excel skills in various professions. The data is analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, median, standard deviation) and inferential statistics (chi- square, t-tests, ANOVA), with data visualization tools used to uncover key trends. The findings aim to help educators refine Excel training programs, enhance curricula, and bridge the gap between academic learning and industry needs.

Results

1. **Demographic Frequency Distribution**

Table 1: Demographic Frequency Table

Demographic Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age		
18-20 years	16	15.2
21-25 years	87	82.9
25-30 years	2	1.9
Gender		
Male	74	70.5
Female	31	29.5
Education		
High school	1	1.0
Undergraduate	43	41.0
Postgraduate	61	58.1

Interpretation

The demographic frequency distribution shows that most respondents (82.9%) are aged 21- 25 years, with fewer in the 18-20 years (15.2%) and 25-30 years (1.9%) categories. This suggests that the majority are young adults, likely university students or early-career

professionals. In terms of gender, 70.5% are male, while 29.5% are female, indicating a notable gender disparity. Regarding education, 58.1% are postgraduates, 41% are undergraduates, and only 1% have completed high school. This suggests that Excel proficiency is more relevant to individuals pursuing or having completed higher education. The study predominantly represents young, male, and highly educated participants. These factors may influence the findings on Excel proficiency and academic performance.

User Preferences for Advanced Excel Features and Their Role N Nhancing Productivity
Table 2: User Preferences for Advanced Excel Features and Their Role in Enhancing Productivity

Objective Statement	Response Option	Count	Frequency (%)
Most Used Advanced Excel Feature	Pivot Tables	45	42.90%
	Data Visualization (Charts, Graphs)	25	23.80%
	Advanced Formulas (VLOOKUP, INDEX-MATCH)	18	17.10%
	Macros & Automation	10	9.50%
	Power Query & Power Pivot	7	6.70%
Role of Advanced Excel in Enhancing Productivity	Yes	72	68.60%
	No	33	31.40%
Total		105	100.00%

Interpretation

The survey results indicate that **Pivot Tables** are the most widely used **advanced Excel feature**, with **42.9%** of respondents relying on them for data analysis, followed by **Data Visualization (23.8%)** and **Advanced Formulas (17.1%)**. Meanwhile, **Macros & Automation (9.5%)** and **Power Query & Power Pivot (6.7%)** are used less frequently. Additionally, **68.6% of respondents** believe that **advanced Excel skills significantly enhance productivity**, whereas **31.4%** do not share this view. These findings highlight the importance of **Excel proficiency in data analysis and automation**, reinforcing its role in boosting workplace efficiency.

Frequency of Advanced Excel Usage and Its Impact on Academic Performance
Table 3: Frequency of Advanced Excel Usage and Its Impact on Academic Performance

Objective Statement	Response Option	Count	Frequency (%)
Assess Frequency of Advanced Excel Usage	Daily	29	27.60%
	Weekly	33	31.40%
	Monthly	43	41.00%
Impact of Advanced Excel Usage on Academic Performance	Yes	54	51.40%
	No	48	45.70%
	Maybe	3	2.90%
Total		105	100.00%

Interpretation

The majority of respondents use **Advanced Excel on a monthly basis (41%)**, followed by **weekly users (31.4%)**, and **daily users (27.6%)**, indicating varying levels of reliance on the software. Regarding its impact on academic performance, responses were divided, with **51.4%** agreeing that **Excel usage enhances their academic success**, while **45.7%** did not perceive any significant benefit. A small percentage (**2.9%**) were uncertain. These findings suggest that **Excel plays a crucial role in academic tasks for many students**, but the extent of its impact varies depending on individual usage patterns and learning styles.

Chi-Square Test

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no relationship between **education level** and the **perceived importance of**   **advanced Excel skills**. **Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):** There is a relationship between **education level** and the **perceived importance of advanced Excel skills**.

Table 4: Chi-Square Test between Education Level and Perceived Importance of Advanced Excel Skills

Chi-Square Tests	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.745a	6	0.577
Likelihood Ratio	5.358	6	0.499
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.587	1	0.108
N of Valid Cases	**105**		

a. 6 cells (50.0%) have expected counts less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.05.

Interpretation

Since all p-values are greater than the conventional significance level of 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This means there is no significant relationship between education level and the perceived importance of advanced Excel skills.

Additionally, 6 cells (50.0%) have expected counts less than 5, with a minimum expected count of 0.05, which may indicate potential reliability issues with the Chi- Square test results. Therefore, caution should be exercised when interpreting these findings. Further statistical analysis, such as Fisher's Exact Test or alternative regression models, may be needed to confirm these results.

ANOVA Test

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant difference in the perceived importance of advanced Excel skills **among different** education levels**. Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant difference in the** perceived importance of advanced Excel skills **among different** education levels**.**

Table 5: ANOVA Test between Education Level and Perceived Importance of Advanced Excel Skills

ANOVA	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.180	3	0.393	1.295	0.280
Within Groups	30.668	101	0.304		
Total	31.848	104			

Interpretation

The p-value obtained from the F-test is 0.280, which is greater than the conventional significance level of 0.05. Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, indicating that there is no significant difference in the perceived importance of advanced Excel skills across different education levels.

In summary, the ANOVA results suggest that education level does not significantly impact how students perceive the importance of advanced Excel skills. This implies that students across all educational backgrounds value Excel proficiency similarly, reinforcing its broad relevance in both academic and professional settings.

Correlation

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant correlation between Excel proficiency before training **and** the frequency of applying advanced Excel skills in academic or professional activities**.**

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant correlation between Excel proficiency before training **and** the frequency of applying advanced Excel skills in academic or professional activities**.**

Table 6: Correlation between Excel Proficiency Before Training and Frequency of Applying Advanced Excel Skills

Correlations	Excel Proficiency Before Training	Frequency of Applying Advanced Excel Skills
Excel Proficiency Before Training	Pearson Correlation = **1**	**0.241**
	Sig. (2-tailed) = **—**	**0.007**
Frequency of Applying Advanced Excel Skills	Pearson Correlation = **0.241**	**1**
	Sig. (2-tailed) = **0.007**	**—**
N	**105**	**105**

Interpretation

- Pearson Correlation Coefficient: 0.241 (indicating a weak positive correlation between prior Excel proficiency and the frequency of applying Excel skills).
- Significance Level (Sig. 2-tailed): 0.007 (significant at the 0.01 level).

Since the p-value (0.007) is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis, confirming that there is a statistically significant correlation between Excel proficiency before training and the frequency of applying advanced Excel skills in academic or professional activities.

In summary, individuals with higher initial Excel proficiency are more likely to frequently apply advanced Excel skills, suggesting that prior knowledge plays a role in the effective utilization of Excel in practical applications.

Regression

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant relationship between education level **and** Excel proficiency before training**. Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant relationship between** education level **and** Excel proficiency before training**.**

Regression Model Summary

Model	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	0.058	0.048	0.574

Regression Coefficients

Table 7: Regression between Education Level and Excel Proficiency Before Training

Coefficients	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t-value	Sig.
Constant	1.072	0.366	—	2.927	0.004
Education Level	0.255	0.102	0.240	2.510	0.014

Interpretation

- The **p-value (0.014)** for **education level** is **less than 0.05**, indicating that **education level is a significant predictor** of Excel proficiency before training.
- The **positive coefficient (B = 0.255)** suggests that as **education level increases**, **Excel proficiency before training also increases**.
- However, the **R Square value (0.058)** indicates that **only 5.8% of the variation** in Excel proficiency before training is explained by education level, suggesting other factors may also play a role.

Since the p-value is significant, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis, concluding that education level has a significant impact on Excel proficiency before training, although the overall explanatory power of the model is low.

Research Gap

Despite the growing reliance on advanced Excel skills in academic and professional settings, several key research gaps remain. While many studies emphasize the importance of Excel proficiency, limited research explores the direct impact of advanced Excel training on students' academic performance and employability. Most existing literature focuses on basic Excel functions, with insufficient attention given to advanced features like Power Query, Power Pivot, Macros, and VBA, which are increasingly valued in the job market. Additionally, there is a lack of comparative studies analyzing how students from different academic disciplines perceive and apply Excel skills, leaving a gap in understanding discipline-specific requirements across fields such as business, engineering, and data science. Although

employer expectations for Excel skills are well-documented, little empirical evidence exists on how Excel training translates into actual job performance and career growth. Moreover, prior studies often rely on self-reported data, which may be biased, highlighting the need for longitudinal research that tracks students' Excel proficiency over time and measures real-world skill application. Addressing these gaps will provide a deeper understanding of how advanced Excel education enhances students' competencies and career prospects.

Findings and Suggestions
Findings

Demographic Insights: The study found that the majority of respondents were young adults (21-25 years), with more male participants (70.5%) than females (29.5%). Most respondents were postgraduates (58.1%), highlighting Excel's relevance in higher education.

Usage of Advanced Excel Features: Pivot Tables (42.9%) were the most frequently used feature, followed by Data Visualization (23.8%) and Advanced Formulas (17.1%). However, automation tools like Macros (9.5%) and Power Query (6.7%) were less commonly used.

Impact on Academic Performance: While 51.4% of students agreed that advanced Excel skills improved their academic success, 45.7% did not perceive significant benefits, suggesting that effectiveness may depend on application and learning methods.

Productivity Enhancement: A majority (68.6%) believed that Excel proficiency enhances productivity, emphasizing its role in data-driven decision-making and efficiency in academic and professional tasks.

Statistical Analysis Results: The Chi-Square and ANOVA tests indicated no significant relationship between education level and the perceived importance of Excel skills. However, regression analysis showed that higher education levels correlated with better initial Excel proficiency.

Correlation Between Training and Application: A weak but significant correlation (0.241) was found between Excel proficiency before training and its frequent application in academic and professional settings, suggesting that prior knowledge influences skill utilization.

Suggestions

Enhance Curriculum Integration: Academic institutions should incorporate advanced Excel training into coursework across disciplines, ensuring students gain hands-on experience with industry-relevant tools like Power Query, Power Pivot, and VBA.

Encourage Practical Application: To maximize learning outcomes, universities should implement project-based learning, case studies, and real-world data analysis assignments that reinforce Excel skills.

Promote Certification and Workshops: Certification programs and specialized workshops can help bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, making students more competitive in the job market.

Increase Awareness of Advanced Features: Since features like Macros and Power Query were underutilized, targeted training should emphasize automation and data processing to improve efficiency.

Conduct Longitudinal Studies: Future research should track students' progress over time to measure the long-term impact of Excel training on academic success and employability.

Conclusion

This study examines the impact of advanced Excel training on students' academic performance, skill development, and employability, emphasizing its growing importance in today's data- driven world. The findings indicate that Excel proficiency enhances students' ability to analyze data, improve decision-making, and increase workplace efficiency. However, challenges such as limited access to advanced training, varying levels of prior knowledge, and the need for practical applications remain.

To bridge these gaps, collaboration between educators, industry experts, and policymakers is essential in designing curricula that align with real-world demands. Encouraging hands-on learning, certification programs, and continuous skill development will further empower students and professionals to leverage Excel effectively. As technology and data analytics evolve, ongoing research and adaptation are crucial to ensuring that Excel training remains relevant and beneficial for future workforce needs.

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