A lot of swot – good or not?

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For The Straits Times

I found that while more time on out-of-school study is initially associated with better academic performance, the benefits seem to diminish the more that time is given to this. The relationship between academic performance and out-of-school study time is positive up until 36 hours of study per week – and then becomes negative.

What do these results mean? First, contrary to conventional wisdom, it’s not clear that putting in more study hours always translates to better academic performance.

The patterns are consistent with there being an optimal level of study time. More need not always be better, because devoting too much time to out-of-school study may become counterproductive as students grow tired and stressed, and find it hard to absorb the material effectively.

Of course, it is also possible that the associations between academic performance and out-of-school study time could be driven by “reverse causality.” In other words, extremely high out-of-school hours could be in conjunction with low student performance, simply because weaker students tend to devote more time to study in an effort to catch up.

While we cannot tell which of the two potential explanations is the reason, there does seem to be evidence suggesting that too much study time could result in lower student performance.

The moral of the story? Study hard, but do so in moderation.

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