Student attitudes

Attitudes to school and to certain subjects can shape students' interactions as they progress through their education. For this reason, it was important to collect information about students' attitudes to learning. The PILNA programme took an approach that incorporated students' opinions to school overall and to each of the three cognitive domains covered by PILNA: reading, writing and numeracy.

Students were provided with a list of statements (such as "I enjoy going to school") and asked to rate how much they agreed with each statement. Students could respond with 'Agree a lot', 'Agree', 'Disagree', or 'Disagree a lot'. The statements covered:

- whether students enjoyed the activity;
- whether students did the activity in their own time;
- whether students thought it was important to be good at the activity;
- whether students found the activity easy; and
- whether students thought they did well in the activity.

Additionally, students were asked whether they thought it was important to go to school, if they felt safe at school, and if they felt like they belonged at school.

Student attitudes to subjects and school

Most students in Fiji, both year four and year six, reported agreement with all the attitude statements ('Agree a lot' or 'Agree') about the cognitive domains and school. This shows overall positive attitudes to reading, writing, mathematics and school.

On average, more than 90% of students in Fiji reported that they enjoyed going to school (year four, 91%; year six, 94%) and felt that it was important to do so (year four, 90%; year six, 93%). Additionally, more than four out of five students reported that they felt safe at school (year four, 87%; year six, 90%) and safe travelling to school (year four, 87%; year six, 90%). Most year four and year six students in Fiji enjoy schooling, value schooling, and feel safe at school and travelling to school.

When it came to literacy, about nine out of ten students reported that they enjoyed reading (year four, 88%; year six, 91%) and writing (year four, 89%; year six, 92%). More than four out of five students reported that they found reading easy (year four, 80%; year six, 88%) and found writing easy (year four, 84%; year six, 90%). Slightly higher proportions of year six students reported agreement on questions related to reading and writing than did year four students.

There was, however, a noticeable difference in agreement for questions related to mathematics. At the year four level, 77% of students agreed that they found mathematics easy and 79% agreed that they did well in mathematics. At the year six level, 73% of students agreed that they found mathematics easy and 77% agreed that they did well in mathematics. These values are lower than the results for reading and writing for both year levels.

Interestingly, students at both year levels still agreed, in similar proportions to reading and writing, that mathematics was important (year four, 86%; year six, 89%), although a slightly lower proportion reported (year four, 85%; year six, 82%) that they enjoyed mathematics compared with reading (year four, 88%; year six, 91%) and writing (year four, 89%; year six, 92%).

The full breakdown of these results can be seen in Table STT1.7.

Table STT1.7

Percentage of students agreeing with statements about, reading, writing and school

Statement	Year 4	Year 6
Reading		
Enjoy reading	88% (0.9)	91% (0.8)
Read in my own time	83% (1.3)	86% (1.1)
Think it is important to be a good reader	86% (1.3)	91% (0.9)
Find reading easy	80% (1.3)	88% (1.1)
Do well in reading	81% (1.2)	87% (1.0)
Writing		
Enjoy writing	89% (1.1)	92% (0.8)
Do writing in my own time	84% (1.3)	85% (1.2)
Think it is important to be a good writer	87% (1.2)	90% (1.0)
Find writing easy	84% (1.5)	90% (0.9)
Do well in writing	84% (1.3)	89% (0.9)
Mathematics		
Enjoy doing mathematics	85% (1.3)	82% (1.2)
Do mathematics in my own time	87% (1.6)	77% (1.5)
Think it is important to be good at mathematics	86% (1.4)	89% (1.0)
Find mathematics easy	77% (1.5)	73% (1.7)
Do well in mathematics	79% (1.6)	77% (1.4)
School		
Enjoy going to school	91% (1.1)	94% (0.7)
Think it is important to go to school	90% (1.2)	93% (0.8)
Think it is important to do well in school	90% (1.2)	92% (0.8)
Find school easy	85% (1.5)	90% (1.0)
Feel like I belong at this school	87% (1.4)	89% (0.9)
Feel safe at the school	87% (1.2)	90% (0.9)
Feel safe travelling to school	87% (1.3)	90% (0.9)

Percentage of students agreeing with statements about, reading, writing, mathematics, and school, Fiji, PILNA 2021

Source: https://pilna.eqap.spc.int/2021/fiji/get-to-know/students/self-reflections/attitudes
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( ) Standard errors appear in parentheses.

Student attitudes and student performance

Using the results above, regional scales for student attitudes on school, reading, writing, and numeracy were established. Higher scores on the scales indicated more positive attitudes to these areas. The scales were then compared to student performance in reading and numeracy. It should be noted that comparisons were not made to writing performance because the proficiency scale for writing performance has not yet been established.

> The PILNA scales for attitudes to school, reading, writing, and numeracy all have an average of 200 and a standard deviation of 40. Most scores on these scales are expected to be within 40 points of 200 (160–240). The attitudes to reading, writing, and numeracy scales were all formed from the five questions students were asked in each area. The attitude to school scale was formed from the answers to seven questions students were asked in this area.

Comparisons to student performance were made between the average attitudes of students who were at or above expected levels of performance and students who were below these levels of performance.

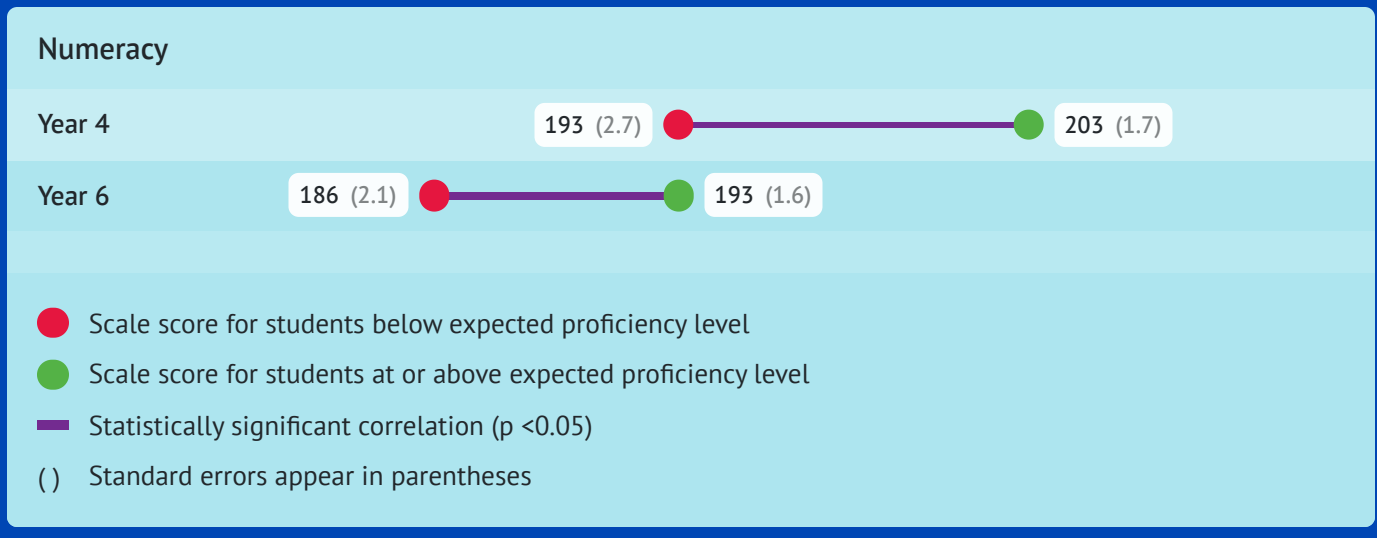
The analysis showed that, across both year levels, students who performed at or above the expected proficiency level in reading and numeracy scored higher on the attitude scales for reading, numeracy and school. This means that they tended to have positive attitudes to reading, mathematics and school.

Year four and year six students who performed at or above the expected level in numeracy had higher attitude scores to mathematics on average (year four, 203; year six, 193) than students in the same year groups who did not meet expected numeracy performance (year four, 193; year six, 186).

Interestingly, year six students who met the expected level of numeracy performance had lower average attitude scores (193) than did year four students who met the expected numeracy performance (203). Year six students who did not meet the expected numeracy performance also had lower average attitude scores (186) than year four students who did not meet the expected numeracy performance (193). This indicates that year six students had lower attitude scores to mathematics than year fours in both performance categories. These results are presented in Figure STF1.3.

Figure STF1.3: PILNA Scale: Student attitudes to numeracy

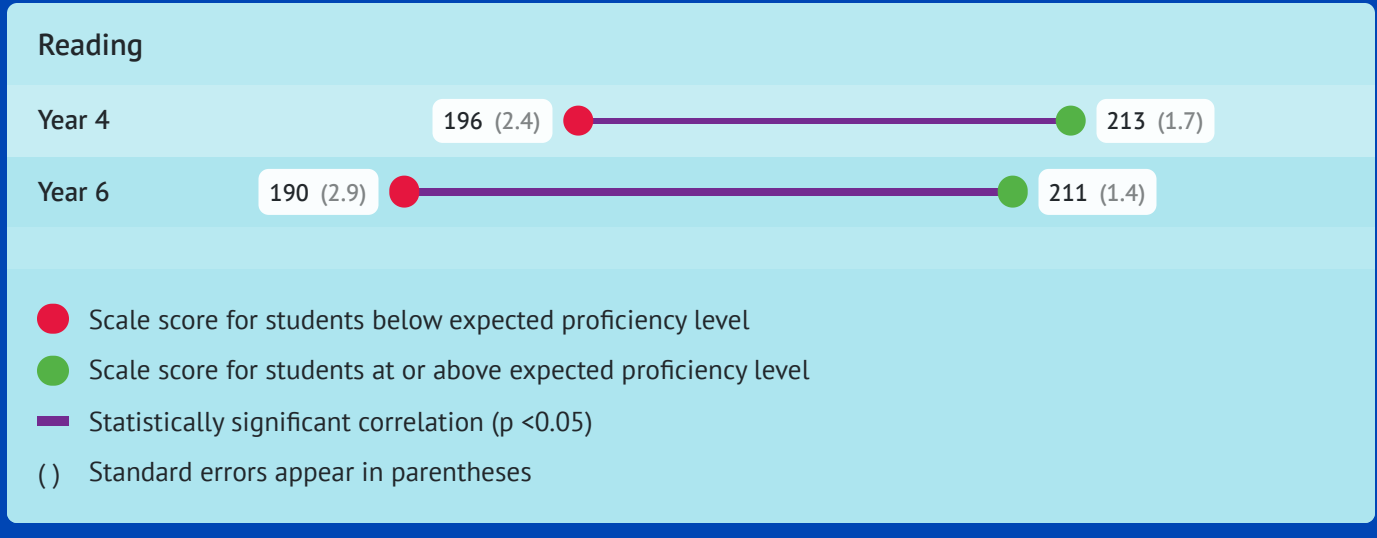
Average scores of students on attitude towards mathematics scale by year level and proficiency.



The differences in attitudes were greater between the performance levels for reading than for numeracy. Year four and year six students who performed at or above the expected level in reading had higher attitude scores to reading on average (year four, 213; year six, 211) than students in the same year groups who did not meet expected reading performance (year four, 196; year six, 190). The differences between year four attitude scores and year six attitude scores were smaller for reading than for numeracy. These comparisons are shown in Figure STF1.4.

Figure STF1.4: PILNA Scale: Student attitudes to reading

Average scores of students on attitudes towards reading scale by level and proficiency



Source: https://pilna.eqap.spc.int/2021/fiji/get-to-know/students/self-reflections/attitudes
Jan 14, 2024, 08:12

Comparisons were also made between student performance and attitudes to school in general. Across both year four and year six levels, students who were performing at or above the expected level had higher attitude scores to school in general. This was true for students performing at the expected levels in numeracy and for students performing at the expected levels in reading. STF1.5 shows these comparisons.

Figure STF1.5: PILNA Scale: Student attitudes to schooling

Average scores of students on attitude towards schooling scale by year level and proficiency

What does this mean?

The findings from this PILNA cycle show that a high proportion of students in Fiji in both year levels are enjoying reading, writing and mathematics and identify them as being important. However, when it comes to ratings about finding each subject easy or rating themselves as doing well in each subject, one area falls behind: numeracy. Numeracy ratings in these areas for both year levels were lower than for reading and writing. This may mean that a large proportion are challenged by the subject than are challenged by reading and writing. This may be an area that requires more attention by educators.

When comparing student attitude scores to performance, one thing was clear; students who met the expected performance in a subject area had higher attitude scores for the subject and for school in general. The same associations were identified at the regional level. This suggests an association between student attitudes to a subject and their performance in that subject. Importantly, this association is not clear and causality cannot be determined. For example, do positive attitudes to reading make someone more likely to be a better reader or is it the case that those who are already good at reading develop positive attitudes to reading because it's easier for them?

Source: https://pilna.eqap.spc.int/2021/fiji/get-to-know/students/self-reflections/attitudes
Jan 14, 2024, 08:12