

The Association Between Academic Motivation and Self-Esteem

Amber Brown & Cameron Beatty, Ph.D., Florida State University, College of Education

Introduction

Abstract

As students transition to college, they may begin to realize who they are, what they value, and how that impacts their self-image. College is a new environment and for many, the first opportunity at independence and having the chance to decide the direction they want to take in their lives. Additionally with a predominantly online world, comparison and expectations to excel at younger and younger ages may lead to students deciphering why they chose to go to college. By looking at a possible correlation between these variables, we could identify a relationship between academic motivation and self-esteem.

Aims of the Research

This research aims to examine the relations between academic motivation and self-esteem. While college is one of the most quintessential periods of growth for young adults, college provides the opportunity for self-reflection, introspection, and self-exploration. Some students may enter college as an exploratory major because their parents required them to attend and pursue a degree. Some students may have had a driving force to attend college, such as their intrinsic motivation. This research aims to understand whether these factors are associated.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

1. What is the association between self-esteem and academic motivation?
2. What demographical differences may impact academic motivation and self-esteem?

I hypothesize a positive relationship between academic motivation and self-esteem.

Method

Research Design

Participants will be provided a survey. Participants will take Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) and the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS). Participants will be given the autonomy to decide the device they will take the survey on as it will be provided online. The questionnaires will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. It will be available through Qualtrics Florida State University. The short questionnaires will encourage truthful answers. This will assist with internal validity. Additionally, to encourage participants to take their time when answering, there will be a disclaimer at the beginning of the survey that mentions the estimated duration and the expected effort level.

Participants

Participants will be 50 undergraduate college students at Florida State University. These students will be primarily first-year college students from all over the nation. This will provide a varied perspective on the association between self-esteem and academic motivation. Additionally, it will give different demographics, which can later be evaluated for possible similarities. I also will aim to have second through fourth-year college students to determine if there is a difference after the first year of college in academic motivation and self-esteem. To access these participants, I will communicate with Resident Assistants throughout Florida State University Housing in addition to students around campus.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection and analysis is ongoing. To analyze the data, I will be using SPSS Statistics 27 to conduct a correlation analysis.

To analyze demographics (parental marital status, age, gender, race, year in school, and employment status), I plan to conduct t-tests.

Results

Discussion

One strength of this study is that it is highly accessible for college students. Because surveys will be administered online, they can decide when they would like to take the survey. Additionally, it will take a short period to take the survey, which may encourage the students to complete the surveys without experiencing fatigue.

An additional strength is the insight that this study could provide into the different experiences of college students. As students learn about themselves and how they change from year to year, an analysis of the different years in college could provide a perspective that shows what priorities are vital for students in different stages of their academic degree attainment.

A weakness of the study is that it is cross-sectional. I only collected data from students at one semester at Florida State University. A larger population of students from other universities would be ideal for providing varied experiences and increasing generalizability. A longitudinal study would be beneficial to understand how it may change over time.

Due to the correlational nature of the study, it will only be possible to understand the relation between self-esteem and academic motivation. The design cannot provide information about possible causal relationships.

Key References

Chen, Z., Sun, K., & Wang, K. (2017). Self-esteem, achievement goals, and self-handicapping in college physical education. *Psychological Reports, 121*(4), 690-704. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033294117735333>

Régner, & Loose, F. (2006). Relationship of sociocultural factors and academic self-esteem to school grades and school disengagement in North African French adolescents. *The British Journal of Social Psychology, 45*(4), 777-797. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466605X83610>

Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton University Press.

Vallerand, R.J., Blais, M.R., Brière, N.M., & Pelletier, L.G. (1989). Construction and validation of the Motivation Scale in Education (EME). *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 21*, 323-349.

Wang, K. T. (2012). Personal and family perfectionism of Taiwanese college students: Relationships with depression, self-esteem, achievement motivation, and academic grades. *International Journal of Psychology, 47*(4), 305-314. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207594.2011.626050>

The research reported here was supported by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, through Grants R305B170017 and R305B210014 to Florida State University. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of the Institute or the U.S. Department of Education.

