

Students' Perceived Autonomy Support and its Impact on Achievement Goals

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ABSTRACT: This study is about Students' Perceived Autonomy Support and its Impact on Achievement Goals. There are two types of achievement goals, mastery and performance goals. The age of participants ranges 20-25 year. This study shows the co relation between the achievement goals and student perceived autonomy support. The sample was consisted of 100,50 male and 50 female participants taken from Bhaud din Zikariya University Multan. Autonomy support and achievement goal scales were administered on participants. Results indicate that there is strong positive co-relation between perceived autonomy support and achievement goal. Female perceive more autonomy support than males. The results indicated that male have more mastery goal than females. Female have more performance goals than male students. Joint family system is also showing the high perceived autonomy support than students of nuclear family system. Students of urban area are also showing the high perceived autonomy support than students of rural area.

KEYWORDS: perceived autonomy support, achievement goals.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 WHAT IS AUTONOMY?

For a definition of autonomy, Benson & Voller (1997) stated that an autonomy is an ability of a learner which is used by him to explore the ways and decisions to learn by own self. the word autonomy can be use in different ways as well as in different situations. Benson and Voller (1997), for instance, explain the five ways in which the word autonomy could be used; it can be used for the situations and circumstances in which the learners are entirely able to study the subject material by their own; it can be used for those skills and abilities whose learning and application is directed by their own; it can be used for the inherited ability of the learner that is not explored by the individual educational systems of different institutions; it can be used for the repeated practices an experiences of the responsibilities of learner for their own process of learning; it can be used for the rights of the learners to select the ways and methods of thei own learning.

There are, however, lot many dimensions, including educational set up, in which the term autonomy can be defined; sheerin (1991), for instance, claimed the autonomy as independence. The word autonomy can be defined in term of language awareness (Lier, 1996). Candy (1991) explained the term autonomy as self-direction.

1.2 LEARNER AUTONOMY

After defining the term autonomy, there is a struggle to focus the attention on the explanation of learner autonomy. Little (1991) define learner autonomy as the learner is in autonomous condition when there is the relationship between the process of learning and the content of learning, while the relationship is purely psychological. This relationship, being too

much strong to lead the learner from attachment to detachment, critically thoughts, from suggestion to decision making, and from dependence to independence. Learner autonomy is the learner willingness, direction, and ability to have firm control on learning as well as learning method. He has the qualities of selection of aims independently, selection of materials, methods, goals, targets, selection of exercise to practice, organization and management of selected goals and targets, as well as evaluate himself independently (Holec, 1985).

Autonomous learners play an active role instead of passive role in the whole process of learning. He is entirely different, from the casual learner, in the generation of ideas and engaging different opportunities of learning, as the casual learner only follow the instructions of the teacher in the same one direction (Boud, 1988; Kohonen, 1992; Knowles, 1980). Autonomous learner actively makes the meanings of different tasks as well as different situations. He is not one to whom the things can change; he is one who actual change the things. He has the control over the environment instead of being controlled by the environment. He makes his own desired interaction to external world for his learning (Rathbone, 1971; Candy, 1991). Learning is not just to memorize the event, it is a complicated process of searching out the meanings of the events efficiently (Candy, 1991).

1.3 LEARNER AUTONOMY AND DOMINANT PHILOSOPHIES OF LEARNING

In this portion, there will be an exploration of connection between the dominant philosophical approaches of learning and learner autonomy. According to the positivists, whole the knowledge and learning is based on the objective reality the things. If the teachers, with their keen passion, make them able to achieve that objective reality, learning will not remain so hard, rather it can be transmitted from one individual to another with no extra effort (Benson & Voller, 1997). Positivists, on the other hand, strongly support the "hypothesis testing" as the real source of knowledge. They suggested that knowledge can be acquired more effectively when it is discovered rather than taught.

Constructivism is the second philosophical approach which is the core concept in applied linguistic (Halliday, 1979; Benson & Voller, 1997). The individual, according to constructivist, pay whole attention to give meaning to those events and situations in which they are performing their functions. Constructivists focus on the opposite direction to the positivists, as constructivists, explore the view that it is more beneficial for the individuals to recognize and restructure their experience rather than just focusing on the meanings and discovering the objective reality of knowledge. According to constructivist, Knowledge cannot be taught but only can be learned, is the leading proposition (Candy, 1991). Knowledge is actually built up by the learner (Candy, 1991).

1.4 ACHIEVEMENT GOALS

Many researchers have been focusing on the student's achievement goals perspective. There are three general aspects on goals achieved by the students; one of which are the goals for the specific task or target (Bandura, 1997; Locke & Latham, 1990). The goals which are achieved for the specific task or to solve particular problem are known as target goals (Harackiewicz & Sansone, 1991). In the second level of achievement goals, focus is on the reasons of goal achievement. It is based on the proposition that "why" an individual is motivated for the specific orientations of goals (Ford, 1992). At the third level, there comes the goal which lies between the particular target goals and the global goals. These goals can be applied to areas of achievements like in business and athletics (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996).

There is another dimension of achievement goals in which the goals are classified in the two major division; performance goals and mastery goals. Performance goals can be for the standardization of the criteria on the basis of which performance of the individual can be judged (Urban, 1997). On the other hand, different from performance goals, is the mastery goals in which the criteria is set to have superiority or to be a master in certain goal or target (Ford, 1992).

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present research was aimed to explore the impact of students' perceived autonomy support on achievement goal. Students are greatly affected by perceived autonomy support in their achievement goals. It is the general myth, for the large number of people, that psychology only deals with the abnormal individuals. But surprisingly, even fortunately, psychology also deals with normal individuals. Psychology, when, deals with normal people it leads to those methods and ways which can improve the individuals in several dimensions. These include thought patterns, decision making power and lot many

other dimensions. Psychological researches have been focusing on infinite areas of life, like industries, clinical set up, supports, even education but not enough as it should be in Pakistan. I am, that is why, feeling glad to have my interest in the area of education. In the education system the autonomy support for the learner play an important role in their goal achievements. So the objectives of my study are as follows;

1. To see the relationship between perceived autonomy and achievement goal
2. To check the effect of perceived autonomy amongst male and female student
3. To check the different dimension of achievement goals and there relation with perceived autonomy.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Students perceiving the autonomy support will feel the sense of freedom and an independent self and focus on learning the themes of different concepts, such as; mastery goals, rather than the students which do not perceive autonomy support from their teacher an just focus on the grade of the courses to encourage their status, such as; performance goals (Deci & Ryan, 1991). Research, in the social context, proved that the students, perceiving more autonomy support, prefer better conceptual learning as compared to the students with perceiving low autonomy support (Grolnick & Ryan, 1987). Many researches also focus on the learning strategies for the learner, best suitable, for their encouragement. These learning strategies are actually different mental processes that are used by the learner, may be while working on the learning of a new language or a new skill, to manage their plan to do so. These mental processes are the choices of actions for learner to act upon. It will be more beneficial for the learner if these are selected by the learner himself by giving him the autonomy to select (Skehan, 1998). These strategies include; cognitive strategies and met-cognitive strategies. Cognitive strategies are those which largely focus on the information 'that is to be learned' coming from external environment and manipulating that information in such way that, no doubt, will up stair the process of learning (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). Now, it is up to learner, who can use any one or all the options from learning strategies; he may use repetition speech, translation, note-taking, contextualization, transferring, inference, questioning for clarification; all these are the cognitive strategies on which a learner can work for his better learning (Cook, 1993). While, on the other hand, met-cognitive strategies are those facts which are acquired by the learner for their own cognitive functions. These cognitive processes are used by the learner to have knowledge and skills in the variety of situations (Wenden, 1998).

Achievement goals, on the other hand, of the students deal with their aims of learning and attaining the particular goals in a specific academic setup (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Different researches on achievement goals, largely, focus on the two opposite poles of achievement goals, on one pole, mastery goals are there and performance goals are on the second pole. There is a great deal of investigation on the opposing affect of mastery and performance goals on different aspects of learning and achievement. It is, yet, debatable that which type of achievement goal has the positive or negative effect on the process of learning, either the mastery goals have positive effect or the performance goals play an efficient role in learning (Barron & Harackiewicz, 2001; Pintrich, 2000). According to the supporters of mastery goals, including its all types, performance goals are not so effective in learning process and achievement as compared to the mastery goals (Midgley, Kaplan, & Middleton, 2001). While, in contrast, according to supporters of performance goals indicate the positive nature of performance goals (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996). Some researchers, therefore, encourage the both achievement goals and in favor that these both goals should go side by side in relating to each other for better learning (Barron & Harackiewicz, 2001). Elementary students with high mastery goals use more adaptive and higher level of achievement (Meece and Holt, 1993).

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 SAMPLE

The sample was consisted of N=100, male and female students (50 males and 50 females), the participants were enrolled in Government colleges of Multan and Age limit for sample was 18-20 for sample.

3.2 INSTRUMENTS AND DATA COLLECTION

Achievement goal scale: It was developed by Elliot and MC Gregor (2001) is 7- point self-report scales designed to measure the types of Achievement Goals. It is a 12 Item scale. The scale provides a score for each of the following two types

of achievement goals. Add the following answer values to obtain the score. Mastery (item 2, 3, 6, 7, 10 and 11) Performance (item 1,4, 5, 8, 9 and 12)

The Learning Climate Questionnaire (LCQ): The questionnaire is typically used with respect to specific learning settings, such as a particular class, at the college or graduate school level. Thus, the questions are sometimes adapted slightly, at least in the instructions, so the wording pertains to the particular situation being studied—an organic chemistry class, for example. In these cases, the questions pertain to the autonomy support of an individual instructor, preceptor, or professor. If, however, it is being used to assess a general learning climate in which each student has several instructors, the questions are stated with respect to the autonomy support of the faculty members in general.

Procedure: In order to conduct research, data was taken from males and females, Simple random sampling technique was applied for to select the true representative of population; although the population was homogeneous i.e. education, age and courses, instead they belong to the diverse characteristics like family background, therefore, to formulate concrete homogeneity the researchers exclude the family background and just asked about basic demographics questions from the respondents. First of all, I introduced myself to participants and told them the purpose of my research. Rapport developed with the participants and they assured that their information would be kept confidential. They were given a consent form, demographic sheet, perceived autonomy scale, and achievement goal scale. Participants were given special thanks for providing information and assisting in research.

4 HYPOTHESIS OF STUDY

1. Perceived autonomy support will be positively correlated with achievement goals.
2. Students who perceived autonomy will have mastery goals than performance goals
3. Female students will perceive more autonomy support than male students.
4. Male students will have more mastery goals than female students.
5. Female students will have more performance goals than male students.
6. Students of joint family system show high perceived autonomy support than students of nuclear system.
7. Students from urban area perceive more autonomy support than students from rural areas.

5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The collected data from students were statistically analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). In order to get comprehensive profile of achievement goals of students in terms of their perceived autonomy support in classroom. To see the relationship and comparison, correlation and independent sample t-test were computed respectively.

Table 1
Correlation between perceived autonomy support and achievement goals

Achievement Goals	Perceived Autonomy Support	
	R	P
Mastery	.83	0.01
performance	.44	0.05

Table 1 shows the significant positive relationship between achievement goals and perceived autonomy support. Results indicated that mastery goal have strong positive and significant co relation than performance Goals. It means that there will be an increase in the value of achievement goals with increase of perceived autonomy support. Results, in the parallel way, suggest that when we enhance the autonomy support, mastery goals are more preferred by the students as compared to the performance goals.

Table 2.

Means, Standard Deviations and t-value for the Scores of Male and female Students on Perceived Autonomy Support (N = 100)

Gender	N	M	SD	t	P
Males	50	44.18	7.10	1.936	0.04*
Females	50	63.35	8.47		

*df = 98, *p < 0.05*

Above mentioned table shows Means, Standard Deviations and t-value for the Scores of Male and female Students on Perceived Autonomy Support (t =1.936, df = 98, *p < 0.05). The results indicated that there is a significant difference between male and female in perceived autonomy support and female perceive more autonomy support than males.

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations and t-value for the Scores of Male and female Students on Mastery Goals (N = 100)

Gender	N	M	SD	t	P
Males	50	76.23	11.10	1.238	0.02*
Females	50	63.31	10.47		

*df = 98, *p < 0.05*

Above mentioned table shows Means, Standard Deviations and t-value for the Scores of Male and female Students on Mastery Goal (t =1.238, df = 98, *p < 0.05). The p value is smaller than 0.05 which indicates that there is the significant difference between males and females in the preference to achieve mastery goals and males prefer to have more mastery goal than females.

Table 4

Means, Standard Deviations and t-value for the Scores of Male and female Students on Performance Goals (N = 100)

Gender	N	M	SD	t	P
Males	50	56.23	10.10	1.852	0.01*
Females	50	69.42	09.31		

*df = 98, *p < 0.05*

Above mentioned table shows Means, Standard Deviations and t-value for the Scores of Male and female Students performance goals (t =1.852, df = 98, *p < 0.05). The results indicated that there is significant difference between males and females in the preference to achieve performance goals and female students have more performance goals than male students.

Table 5
Means, Standard Deviations and t-value for the Scores of Students Living in Joint and Nuclear Family System on Perceived Autonomy Support

Family System	N	M	SD	t	P
Joint	44	31.18	11.52	2.042	0.04*
Nuclear	56	28.13	10.60		

*df = 98, *p < 0.01*

Results indicate that students living in joint family system report more perceived autonomy support as compared to students living in nuclear family system ($t = 2.042$, $df = 98$, $*p < 0.01$). The mean score of students indicate the difference on perceived autonomy support of joint family system an nuclear family system and depicts that students with joint family system is also showing the high perceived autonomy support than students of nuclear family system.

Table 6
Means, Standard Deviations and t-value for the Scores of Students Living in Rural and Urban Area on Perceived Autonomy Support

Area	N	M	SD	T	P
Rural	37	37.93	12.62	1.082	0.03*
Urban	63	48.71	11.60		

*df = 98, *p < 0.01*

Results indicate that students living in urban area report more perceived autonomy support as compared to students living in rural area ($t = 1.082$, $df = 98$, $*p < 0.01$). The mean score of students indicate the difference on perceived autonomy support of students of urban areas and students of rural areas and depicts that students of urban areas is showing the high perceived autonomy support than students of rural area.

6 CONCLUSION

In the light of above mention results and discussion on perceived autonomy support and achievement goals, there are some findings. Overall the result shows that there is a significant difference exists in perceiving autonomy support between males and females. The results show the significant positive relationship between achievement goals and perceived autonomy support. Results indicated that mastery goal have strong positive and significant co relation than performance Goals. The results indicated that male have more mastery goal than females. The results indicated that female have more performance goals than male. The results indicated that female have more performance goals than male students. Results indicate that students living in joint family system report more perceived autonomy support as compared to students living in nuclear family system. The mean score of students of joint family system is also showing the high perceived autonomy support than students of nuclear system. Results indicate that students living in urban area report more perceived autonomy support as compared to students living in rural area. The mean score of students of urban area is also showing the high perceived autonomy support than students of rural area.

7 SUGGESTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

- A. Sample used in the present study was small. It should be representative and large enough to generalize the rules to the whole population of students in different universities.
- B. The overall literacy rate of the country should be improved in order to enhance the awareness of the people about the importance of the research so that they may not hesitate while revealing the important information regarding the research topic.
- C. The sample size was small and has limited resources so it was not possible for the researcher to make generalization about the whole population.
- D. The sample was restricted to one institute of Pakistan. It should be nation wide in order to more reliable and authentic.
- E. The time limit was very short for this research. For this type of sensitive topic more time would be given.
- F. The age range of the sample is 20-25
- G. Years old. This study can be conducted on different age group and on different sample.

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