BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY

The Relationship between Epistemological Beliefs,

Achievement Goals and Test Anxiety in Eleventh Grade

Students

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Abstract

Test anxiety is a common universal phenomenon in today's achievement oriented society. The understanding of this phenomenon is crucial to helping students who experience it cope with academic assessments.

The current study aims to propose a model that links justified epistemic ideology and capability perceptions ,as a changing entity, to the intensity of test anxiety thereby experienced and present the contribution of the achievement goals to the correlation between the said variables.

The main argument is that justified epistemic ideology and capability perceptions, as a changing entity, are related to test anxiety where the two achievement goals - learning goals and performance-avoidance goals - are mediators of such correlation.

Research Hypotheses:

1. **A correlation will be found between the achievement goals that the student will tend to adopt and between the intensity of test anxiety thereby experienced.**

    A. Where the student <u>tends to adopt more</u> avoidance goals, the intensity of test anxiety will <u>increase</u>.

    B. Where the student tends to adopt more learning goals, the intensity of test anxiety will decline.

2. **A correlation will be found between the student's justified epistemic ideology and between the type of achievement goal that he tends to adopt.**

    A. Where the student <u>more strongly held</u> a justified epistemic ideology, he will tend to adopt <u>more</u> performance goals.

B. Where the student <u>more strongly held</u> a justified epistemic ideology, he will tend to adopt <u>less</u> learning goals.

3. A correlation will be found between the student's belief in capability as a changing entity and between the type of achievement goals that he tends to adopt.

A. Where the student will have a <u>lower perception</u> of learning capability as a changing entity, he will tend to adopt <u>more</u> performance goals.

B. Where the student will have a <u>stronger perception</u> of learning capability as a changing entity, he will tend to adopt <u>more</u> learning goals.

4. A correlation will be found between justified epistemic ideology and test anxiety mediated by achievement goals.

Justified epistemic ideology will contribute to a <u>high</u> level of test anxiety mediated by performance goals, as follows: where the student <u>more strongly</u> adopts a justified epistemic ideology, his test anxiety will be <u>high</u> mediated by <u>avoidance performance goals</u>, whereas where the student held <u>less</u> to a justified epistemic ideology, his test anxiety will be <u>low</u>, mediated by <u>learning goals.</u>

5. A correlation will be found between the student's perception of his capability as a a changing entity and test anxiety mediated by achievement goals.

The perception of learning capability as a changing entity will contribute to a <u>high</u> level of test anxiety mediated by performance goals, as follows: where the student perceives the learning capacity <u>less</u> as a changing entity, his test anxiety will be <u>high</u> mediated by <u>avoidance performance goals</u>, whereas where the student <u>more strongly</u> perceive the capacity as a changing entity, his anxiety level will be <u>low</u> mediated by <u>learning goals</u>.

Research Questions:

1. Is there a correlation between <u>performance approach goals</u> and test anxiety, and in which direction?

2. Is there a significant difference between the correlation of learning goals and test anxiety, between the correlation of performance approach goals and test anxiety and between the correlation of performance avoidance goals and test anxiety?

3. To what extent is there a direct correlation between justified epistemic ideology and test anxiety?

4. To what extent is there a direct correlation between capability beliefs and test anxiety?

5. Do student background variables (gender, number of family members, parents' education and learning disabilities) predict the test anxiety variable?

The sample consisted of 133 high school juniors (11th grade) in three secular schools in the center and Shfela region. They completed 5 questionnaires: 1) Background information; 2) Capability belief; 3) Epistemic ideology; 4) Individual performance goals; and 5) Test Anxiety Scale (TAS).

Main Findings:

1. Corresponding with the hypothesis, a significant indirect correlation was found between the justified epistemic ideology of human conduct and test anxiety, where the measure of performance avoidance goals were a mediating variable thereof. In other words, where the student adopted a higher level of epistemic ideology of

human conduct, the test anxiety thereby experienced was higher mediated by performance avoidance goals.

2. As opposed to the hypothesis, no significance was found for the indirect effect between the justified epistemic ideology of human conduct and test anxiety, when mediated by learning goals.

3. As opposed to the hypothesis, no significance was found for the indirect effect between the justified epistemic ideology of visual perception and test anxiety, when mediated by learning goals.

4. As opposed to the hypothesis, no significance was found for the indirect effect between the justified epistemic ideology of visual perception and test anxiety, when mediated by performance avoidance goals.

5. As opposed to the hypothesis, no significant correlation was found between capability beliefs as a changing entity and between the test anxiety measure, and the performance goals do not mediate this correlation.

6. Corresponding with the hypothesis, a significant positive correlation of medium effect was found between performance avoidance goals and between test anxiety. In other words, where the student tended to adopt more performance-avoidance goals, the higher the level of test anxiety.

7. As opposed to the hypothesis, a significant positive correlation of low effect was found between learning goals and test anxiety. In other words, where the learning goal measure was higher, test anxiety was greater.

8. A significant positive correlation was found between performance-avoidance goals and between the test anxiety measure. In other words, where the student adopted more performance approach goals, test anxiety was higher.

9. The correlation between the performance-avoidance goals variable and test anxiety is significantly higher than the correlation between learning goals and test anxiety, and than the correlation between performance-approach goals and test anxiety.

10. Corresponding with the hypothesis, a significant positive correlation of medium intensity was found between justified epistemic ideology and performance avoidance goals. Where the student held a justified epistemic ideology of human conduct, he tended more to adopt performance avoidance goals. In addition, a significant positive correlation was found between justified epistemic ideology of human conduct and between performance approach goals. In other words, where the students more strongly held a justified epistemic ideology of human conduct, he tended more to adopt performance approach goals. In addition, in accordance with the hypothesis, a significant positive correlation of medium intensity was found between this ideology and performance avoidance goals. Where the student more strongly held a justified epistemic ideology of human conduct, he tended more to adopt performance avoidance goals.

11. Corresponding with the hypothesis, a significant positive correlation was found between a justified epistemic ideology of visual perception and between performance approach goals. In other words, where the student held a justified epistemic ideology of visual perception, he tended more to adopt performance approach goals. However, as opposed to the hypothesis, no significant correlation

was found between a justified epistemic ideology of visual perception and between performance avoidance goals.

12. As opposed to the hypothesis, a significant positive correlation was found between a justified epistemic ideology of human conduct and between learning performance goals. In other words, where the student more strongly held an epistemic ideology of human conduct, he tended more to adopt learning goals. As such, a significant positive correlation was found between a justified epistemic ideology of visual perception and between learning achievement goals. In other words, the stronger the student's affinity to an epistemic ideology of visual perception, the more he tended to adopt learning goals.

13. As opposed to the hypothesis, no significant correlations were found between beliefs of capability as a changing entity and between learning achievement goals, performance approach goals or performance avoidance goals.

14. No correlation was found between the background variables and the test anxiety variable.

Theoretical and practical implications were discussed and suggestions for future studies were raised.