

Bar-Ilan University

The Relationship between Learners' Intrinsic Motivation
and Wellness by Gender Differences

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Abstract

The aim of the present study is to investigate the relationship between motivation, wellness, gender and the nature of their relationships. Our study is based on Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (2000a, 2000b), and on its modification by Assor (2001). The theory begins with the perception that each human being possesses a sense of drive and movement towards growth and development in order to develop a unified "I" while structuring "Self", which is autonomous on the one hand, and sociable on the other hand. These needs are universal and represent internal requirements. Thus, they appear in every culture and at any period of development. In school context, they are expressed through experience and successful coping with learning different subject areas and disciplines.

The present study focuses on motivation, wellness, gender and the relationship between them. The intensity, the quality and the direction chosen by the individual to achieve their goals will determine their **motivation**. **Wellness** is similar to motivation by definition - "proactive initiating of intentional activities to promote one's health and wealth as well as fulfilling their capabilities" (Shadmi, 2004). **Gender** is the sex and the belonging to a group that is influenced by social stereotypes.

Education, learning, learning achievements, motivation, wellness and gender have been studied for years, and yet, there is still tremendous room for further research on these subjects. Questions such as: what variables are involved in learning? What motivates individuals to an especially meaningful learning? Can children with a lower starting point at school improve their conditions and academic achievements? are very important.

Likewise, the current study deals with questions such as: what produces the best motivational learning, what makes a meaningful learning experience, what implications do genders have, and are these implications still meaningful and influential as in the past? The goal of this study was to discover whether there is a correlation between the types of motivation: Extrinsic, Introjected, Identified, Intrinsic and wellness. Are there any positive or negative links between motivation and wellness? Are there any gender differences between boys and girls in motivation and wellness, and if so, what are they?

The present study included a random sample of one hundred and forty regular high school students from the Central District of Israel. The subjects were 70 boys and 70 girls aged 14-18 (M age = 16.0). Their achievements in Language and Math were used as control variables. Descriptive statistics of the variables were applied. Hypothesized correlations were examined with respect to Pearson's correlations in the entire sample and in boys and girls separately. Similarly, regression analysis and wellness prediction were performed by various types of motivation in the entire sample and in boys and girls separately. Hypothesized mean differences were examined by t-tests. Furthermore, Path Analysis was used in the general sample and in each of the boys and girls samples separately.

Path Analysis has been identified as the most effective in our study. It confirmed our assumption that there is a positive correlation between motivation and wellness. As opposed to our hypothesis, there were no differences between boys and girls in the relationship between motivation and wellness. In contrast, Path Analysis found that there are gender differences in the types of motivation and in the correlations between them on the motivation continuum. Girls reported no correlation with extrinsic motivation at all, whereas among the boys extrinsic motivation was associated with introjected motivation, which was associated with identified motivation, which predicted intrinsic autonomous motivation. Interestingly, boys' reported high levels of academic achievements in math, which served as predictors of intrinsic autonomous motivation. High achievements in mathematics were found in girls who did not identify with their gender. These achievements were associated with identified motivation.

As stated, Path Analysis for the girls, unlike the boys, indicates a transition on the motivation continuum without a hierarchical organization. Girls reported higher levels of academic achievements at the identified motivation stage. Girls seemed to pass the hierarchical motivation continuum since they had learning wellness as well as general wellness.

In conclusion, Path Analysis clearly demonstrates the correlation predicted between motivation, wellness and gender as well as the significance of motivation and wellness in one's own developmental continuum/process, and the fact that it is impossible to separate a certain type of motivation in order to reach wellness, motivation and adequate gender performances. In our

view, these research subjects should be further addressed by longitudinal and cross-sectional studies. Research on gender differences should be further expanded as well. Likewise, the establishment of the developmental stages of motivation is required as it has both theoretical and practical implications.