

BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY

**The Relationship between Student's Achievement
Goals and Motivational Climate in Class and
among Close Friends**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master's Degree in the School of Education, Bar-Ilan
University

Ramat Gan, Israel

2017

Abstract

Student motivation in schools is of great importance in terms of achieving educational outcomes, such as a solid understanding the material and improving general ability (Ames, 1992; Barić, Vlašić, & Erpič, 2014; Dweck & Leggett, 1988). We focus on one of the central theories in educational motivation in this study, i.e., achievement goals theory. four basic concepts: mastery-approach goals, mastery-avoidance goals, performance-approach goals, and performance-avoidance goals. Mastery goals are defined as the desire to acquire knowledge, while performance goals are defined as people's desire to rise above others. Mastery-approach goals are defined as the development of one's own skills, while mastery-avoidance goals are defined as retaining skills and ability. Performance-approach goals focus on the presentation of one's capacity, while performance-avoidance goals attempt to avoid failure, according to Elliot (1999). The current study focuses on three of these goals and does not focus on mastery-avoidance goals.

Some studies show that mastery goals are better than performance goals in terms of the quality of the learning process, as well as academic achievements. For example, students with performance goals tend to use superficial cognitive processing to do tasks, as they are more interested in succeeding than learning for its own sake. Another example in the field of cognition indicates that mastery-approach goals lead to increased recall in learning long-term specific tasks. Long-term memory in someone with performance-approach goals with the same task is not as fulfilling (Murayama & Elliot, 2011; Souvignier & Mokhlesgerami, 2006). However, there are studies showing that the combination of different goals is satisfying. For example, a high level of mastery goals, a high level of performance-approach goals, and a low level of performance-avoidance goals are the most effective combination of learning paradigms. When a student has a high level of mastery goals, learning is key to improving and gaining knowledge. When a student has a high level of performance-approach goals, learning

matters, but not as much as perceiving oneself as “better than others”. When a student has low-level performance-avoidance goals, this is essential in grasping that the student cannot avoid failure: he will study subjects in which he is having trouble, so that his learning will improve (Luo, Paris, Hogan, & Luo, 2011).

The student's close friends will have great influence on each other. Friendship is an ongoing and reciprocal interaction, characterized by intimacy and elements of communication, emotional support, sharing, and trust. Close friendship provides emotional support and reduces the risk of school dropout (Carbonaro & Workman, 2013). These relationships also help in coping with different life situations. For example, when someone becomes a victim, especially one without high-quality social relations, the chances of feeling anxious and depressed increase. Conversely, close friendships can be found in conflict, pressure, and competition.

Studies find that a child's motivation is related to several variables, such as close friends, peer groups, parents, personal interests, etc. This study focuses on student's close friends vs. on peer groups. Our purpose is to examine whether the student's friends will explain more about their motivation to learn than peers, and what kind of motivation is being discussed: mastery goals, performance goals, or both. Another purpose is to examine whether group-level differences in peer motivational climate and teacher's goal emphasis will explain the goal orientations variance.

The term ‘peer-motivational climate’ refers to how class members encourage personal improvement and positive feelings towards other students, with involvement in learning and related activities, promoting the negative aspect that includes abusive school-related comments at classmates (Ntoumanis & Vazou, 2005).

The study involved 855 middle-school students aged 12 to 15. Thirty-six classrooms from nine different schools in northern and central Israel were sampled. Moreover, 59.3% of

study participants were girls and 40.7% were boys, with five questionnaires in this study. One was the achievement goals questionnaire (Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scale-PALS (Midgley et al., 2000)), which examines students' personal goals. The second questionnaire is a PALS class-structure goals questionnaire (Midgley et al., 2000), which examines how students perceive the teacher in emphasizing mastery goals and performance goals. The third one examines peer-motivational climate (Ntoumanis & Vazou, 2005); this was first constructed in the context of sports classes at school. This study was used for classroom subjects, and examined how students perceive peers to encourage motivation. The fourth one looks at peer-nomination (Ryan, 2001). Students must answer two questions about other students in class, e.g.,: "Do you spend time with him?" and "Do you meet him in the afternoon outside school?". Finally, the fifth questionnaire is about personal details (gender, age, grade, area of residence, and general school grades).

The study was conducted during a lesson, with the researcher giving the students the first three and the fifth questionnaires. The fourth questionnaire was distributed with a list of students in the class (as it was intended solely for student numbers, with strict adherence to anonymity of study participants).

Analyses included the validity and reliability of the measurement tools with conventional measures, such as confirmatory factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha as a measure of internal consistency to confirm the theoretical structure of these tools. From these measurements, it can be seen that the model was suitable for the estimated model. Cronbach's alpha was also deemed to be satisfactory.

In order to examine the research questions, an analysis was performed in a hierarchical model with HLM software (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). This program allows for the division of data into three levels - the student (level 1) nested within a group of friends (level 2), and the group nested within the whole class (level 3). This identifies variance at each level and

whether there is more variance among the group of friends vs. the entire class. This analysis can examine the relationship with a peer-motivational climate and with teacher's goal emphasis at each level of analysis.

According to the hypothesis, It was found that in mastery-approach goals, the student's friends can explain the difference on the intrinsic motivation for learning better than entire class. Contrary to the study's hypothesis, it was found that in performance-approach goals, the class can explain the difference better than close friends. Contrary to the study's hypothesis, it was found that in performance-avoidance goals, neither close friends nor the class could explain the difference on the intrinsic motivation for learning.

It was also hypothesized the peer motivational climate and teachers' goal emphasis will explain the group-level differences in achievement goals. The hypothesis was partially supported. The relationship between group-level perception of teachers' mastery goal emphasis and individual-level mastery goal was significant, while group-level perception of teachers' performance goal emphasis or peer motivational climate. Furthermore, for performance-approach and –avoidance goals the group-level perception of teachers' goals emphasis or peer motivational climate were not significant.

The present study also found that when the motivational climate is positive or negative, the student's mastery-approach goals are high; however, the bond is stronger when the motivational climate is positive. The study also found that the more negative the motivational climate, the higher the student's performance-approach goals, as well as the performance-avoidance goals. It was found that when the teacher encourages mastery goals, students will have high performance-approach goals, but even higher mastery goals. When the teacher encourages performance goals, students will have high performance-approach goals and performance-avoidance goals.

This is a correlation study, so we cannot deduce causality. As a result, it is impossible to know if the student is looking for similar friends or is becoming more like his friends over time. In addition, when there is not a pair of students, it is impossible to include all subjects; in other words, when a student respond about another student "How often do they meet during breaks and after school", the other student must answer that question. If only one answers and the other does not, these two subjects cannot be included in the sample. This limitation was resolved by the sample being large enough, so that even if some subjects were removed, it was still representative.

The present study adds theoretical knowledge to the difference in achievement goals of close friends vs. peer groups. Most of the studies dealing with the peer-motivational climate have referred to the class as a classroom and do not distribute the class into social groups. Dividing the class into social groups makes it possible to identify the student's close friends and allows for closer examination of whether they explain the differences more clearly than the rest of the class.

Dividing the class into social groups is another tool for assessing the degree of consolidation in the classroom. A class with many social groups is not sufficiently cohesive and needs team-building activities. In addition, most motivational differences are found among the students themselves, which demonstrates the importance of individual perception. The present study points to the need for individual intervention for greater cohesiveness, not just for classroom intervention.