Mental Health of Youth in relation to their Goal Orientation and Achievement Motivation

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ABSTRACT

Mental health among youth is one of a major concern in India. This includes increased risk in poor academic achievement, goal orientation, problem solving and interpersonal skills. Goal orientation helps an individual to fix a target and taking efforts to achieve the same which requires a need and desire for achievement on various facets. Hence, we could assure that goal orientation and achievement motivation could contribute to the success of individuals which in turn help to protect their wellbeing. This study is conducted to explore the relationship among achievement motivation, goal orientation and mental health among youth. 309 students from different schools in Salem city were selected through stratified random sampling, and the data was collected through a survey. Results revealed that mental health of youth had a significant positive correlation with all the dimensions of achievement motivation. Performance approach and performance avoidance of goal orientation had a significant association with the mental health of youth. Structural Equation Modeling ascertained that achievement motivation and goal orientation had a significant influence on the mental health of youth. The major findings and implications are discussed in the article.

Key words: Mental health, goal orientation, achievement motivation

BACKGROUND

Mental health is an important aspect at every stage of life which includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being of an individual (Salle et al., 2018). It affects how one thinks, feels, and behaves (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017). Today, mental health issues among students are growing concern in schools especially for counsellors and educators (Kumar & Varma, 2019). Because, mental health problems and mental disorders appear to be affecting people at young ages (Zubrick et al., 1995). Rickwood et al., (2005) highlighted that there is an increasing prevalence of mental health problems among students between 12 to 26 years. The impact of mental health problem at this stage of life can be profound (Kosky & Hardy, 1992). The cut throat competition to achieve high levels of academic success makes students anxious and depressed (Anand, 2018) which could adversely affect their mental health. Kouzma and Kennedy (2004) reported that school-related situations – such as tests, grades, studying, self-imposed need to succeed, as well as that induced by others – are the main sources of stress which cause mental health problems for students.

Mental Health

Mental health refers to "a state of well-being in which individuals realize their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her community" (WHO, 2005). Galderisi et al, (2015) defined mental health as "a dynamic state of internal equilibrium which enables individuals to use their abilities in harmony with universal values of society; basic cognitive and social skills; ability to recognize, express and modulate one's own emotions, as well as empathize with others; flexibility and ability to cope with adverse life events and function in social roles; and harmonious relationship between body and mind represent important components of mental health which contribute, to varying degrees, to the state of internal equilibrium." Waterman (1993) and Lamers at el. (2011) conceptualized mental health as a purely positive affect, marked by feelings of happiness and sense of mastery over the environment. Researchers emphasized that mental health issues may persist or indeed worsen during the course of study and have an impact on students' academic performance (Zivin et al, 2009; Mortier et al, 2015 & Auerbach, 2016). So, the mental health of students became a permanent concern in today's world.

Goal Orientation

Goal orientation is an "individual disposition toward developing or validating one's ability in achievement settings" (VandeWalle, 1997). According to McGregor and Elliot (2002), goal orientations are the foundation of any behavior; the type of goal orientation determines how people approach a task and how well they accomplish it. In relation to students' learning goals, it is claimed that goal orientation is a widely used reference framework in

educational psychology (Nicholls, 1984). It refers to the purposes or reasons that students follow to guide their conduct in academic situations (Usan et al., 2019).

Goal orientation also captures how individuals regulate attention and effort in achievement situations (DeShon & Gillespie 2005; VandeWalle, 1997). Goal orientated students have predominantly used a trichotomous framework of achievement motivation (DeShon & Gillespie, 2005; Elliot et al., 2005; VandeWalle, 1997). Students with performance goal orientation try to prove their competence by getting good grades or performing better than other students (Nuthanap, 2007). On the other hand, students with a task goal orientation are motivated by a desire to increase their knowledge on a subject and enjoy learning (Adegboyega, 2018).

Achievement Motivation

Achievement motivation refers to one's determination to succeed in academic studies, and includes academic aspiration and attitude towards school (Adegboyega, 2018). It reflects a pattern of actions and feelings concerned with striving to achieve internalized standard of excellence in performance (Gesinde, 2000). Martinez (2001) found that high levels of motivation to achieve increase student retention rates. Educational researchers have demonstrated achievement motivation as a strong predictor of success, perceived accomplishment, and academic ability (Liao et al., 2012 & Hart et al., 2009). Jarvenoja (2010) suggested that motivation results in an active process by which individuals continue to do a task to fulfill their purposes.

Achievement motivation also ensures that students utilize their time and energy to achieve the standard objectives set before them (Nuthana & Yenagi, 2009). Achievement oriented behaviour is a function of a number of factors including the motive to succeed, the motive to avoid failure, the perceived probability of success and the incentive value of success (Paul, 1982).

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Gomez-Fraguela et al., (2008) highlighted that students go through many personal and contextual situations that strongly affect their development during the learning processes in schools. Dimitrov (2017) opined that there are heavy demands made by the society on students to perform various roles, many of which are undefined, inconsistent and unachievable in the present socio-cultural, economic and bureaucratic contexts of our society, causing heavy stress on students. Bataineh (2013) reported that academic overloads, inadequate time to study, low motivation, and high family expectations were causing stress that leads to mental health issues among students. Kadhiravan (2012) posited that parents want their children to succeed everywhere and expect them to have opportunities for advancement. Thus, students who do not possess the necessary strategies and competencies to successfully meet the demands of academic life, might take a negative attitude towards schooling (Palacio et al., 2012), lose interest in their studies (Salanova et al., 2014), have doubts about their own personal capacity in completing them or even feel physically and psychologically exhausted (Esteve, 2008). These kind of factors result in decreased motivation among students which could reduce their academic performance, and could even lead them to abandon their studies early (De Andrade, 2007; Sbicigo & Dell'Aglio, 2013). Levitt et al., (2007) postulated that identifying youth at early stages of mental health problems and offering them effective treatment is very important. There is a growing recognition that attention to students' mental health functioning in schools would promote learning and helps to prevent numerous negative consequences associated with untreated mental health problems (Ringeisen et al., 2003). Studies have suggested that mental health problems are significant barriers to learning and academic achievement (Atkins et al., 2003; Catalano et al., 2004). The role of goal orientation on students' achievement has been emphasized in various subject areas (Fuchs et al., 2003; Glaser & Brunstein, 2007; Howse et al., 2003; Patrick, Ryan & Kaplan, 2007; Pintrich, 2000; Torrance et al., 2007). Achievement motivation is an essential skill for students' academic success and to set their goals. Hence the present study on influence of goal orientation and achievement motivation on mental health among students is the need of hour.

RESEARCH METHOD

Survey method was adopted in this study. 300 Higher Secondary School students from six different schools in Harur Taluk of Dharmapuri District were selected through stratified random sampling. Mental Health Inventory by Augustine (1988), Goal Orientation Measure by Zweic and Webster (2004) and Achievement Motivation Scale by Shah Beena (1986) were used to collect the data.

Mental Health Inventory is a self-report questionnaire consisted of 60 statements. There are two response categories viz, "Yes" and "No". The test-retest reliability is 0.7 and split-half reliability is 0.83. The divergent validity is 0.18 and convergent validity is 0.62.

The Goal Orientation Measure consisted of 21 statements which explore three dimensions such as Performance approach, Performance avoidance and Learning orientation. There are seven response categories ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree". Internal consistency reliability for the three dimensions are 0.85, 0.82 and 0.69 respectively. The convergent validity are 0.87, 0.79 and 0.81 respectively.

Achievement Motivation Scale consisted of 40 statements which explore four dimensions such as Academic Success, Vocational achievement, Social achievement and Skill achievement. The split-half reliability is 0.79 and the test-retest coefficient is 0.71. Predictive validity of the tool is 0.84. The investigators have re-established the reliability of tools and the Cronbach alpha values are found to be 0.81 for mental health inventory, 0.93 for goal orientation measure and 0.7 for achievement motivation scale.

The investigators visited all the six schools personally and collected data. Out of 300 data collected, some of them were found to be skewed and incomplete. Hence, only 263 data were considered for final analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Difference in academic motivation, goal orientation and mental health among youth based on their gender

Variables	Boys (139)		Girls (124)		't' value
	M_1	SD_1	M_2	SD_2	
Academic Success	21.81	2.68	23.94	3.81	5.28*
Vocational achievement	27.18	4.77	27.65	5.11	0.77[NS]
Social achievement	23.53	2.94	22.22	2.75	3.71*
Skill achievement	24.33	4.30	24.24	4.07	0.17[NS]
Achievement motivation: Total	96.81	8.61	98.07	9.56	1.12[NS]
Performance approach	29.17	4.38	27.03	3.71	4.23*
Performance avoidance	26.77	4.67	27.46	4.58	1.21[NS]
Learning orientation	28.67	4.44	27.48	3.71	2.35*
Mental Health	48.65	5.97	45.41	9.35	3.38*

*   Significant at 0.05 level   NS Not significant

From table 1, it is noticed that girls had higher scores in academic success whereas boys had in social achievement. In general, girls earn higher grades in academics (American Association of University Women Educational Foundation [AAUWEF], 1998; N. S. Cole, 1997; Pomerantz et al., 2002), and graduate from high school with higher overall GPAs than their male counterparts (Perkins et al., 2004). People with better social achievement may engage in interpersonal behaviours and represent broad orientations towards achieving social competence (Ryan & Shim, 2006, 2008). In Indian society, boys do not have any restriction to socialize with others unlike girls. Hence, a high social achievement skills of boys is understandable. Further, the boys had significantly higher score in performance approach and learning orientation of goal orientation. Bouffard et al., (1995) highlighted that girls have higher goal orientation skills than boys and the present finding is contradictory.

Boys had a better mental health than girls. Mental health of an individual is influenced by many social and psychological factors. In Indian society males are more socially active whereas females are still suppressed and they experience a lot of family and social pressures. Hence, it is obvious that boys have a better mental health. The present finding is supported by Afifi (2007) stated that girls are more likely to experience mental health problems like depression.

Table 2: Difference in achievement motivation, goal orientation and mental health among youth based on their stream of study

Variables	Science (138)		Arts (125)		't' value
	M_1	SD_1	M_2	SD_2	
Academic Success	22.57	2.74	23.07	4.05	1.15[NS]
Vocational achievement	27.59	4.95	27.20	4.93	0.63[NS]

Social achievement	22.91	2.83	22.91	3.03	0.02[NS]
Skill achievement	23.09	3.39	25.62	4.58	5.12*
Achievement motivation: Total	96.15	8.23	98.78	9.76	2.37*
Performance approach	27.43	3.79	28.97	4.51	3.01*
Performance avoidance	27.36	5.01	26.80	4.18	0.99[NS]
Learning orientation	27.70	4.24	28.55	4.01	1.66[NS]
Mental Health	44.76	9.05	49.73	5.32	5.35*

*   Significant at 0.05 level   NS Not significant

It is observed from the table 2 that students from arts stream had a better skill achievement and performance approach goal orientation. Art students are more inclined to base their identities on the notion of being skilled and goal-oriented than science students (Furnham et al., 2011). Arts stream is part of a comprehensive education which promotes positive changes in the school environment and improved student performance.

It is also found that arts students had a better mental health than the science students. Singh (2015) opined that students from arts stream spend more time with their friends and they are more stable as they possess the ability to control and direct their emotions according to the situations. At the same time Pant and Srivastava (2019) reported that students did not significantly differ based on their stream of study.

Table 3: Correlation between achievement motivation and mental health among youth

Variables	Academic Success	Vocational achievement	Social achievement	Skill achievement
Mental Health	0.16*	0.43*	0.19*	0.31*

*   Significant at 0.05 level

From table 3, it is noticed that mental health of students had a significant positive relationship with all the dimensions of achievement motivation such as academic success, vocational achievement, social achievement and skill achievement. Students with high achievement motivation try to master difficult challenges, set realistic goals, and are willing to take risks which could enhance their mental health. Hence the positive association between mental health and achievement motivation is quite understandable. Kumar and Varma (2019) found that mental health of the students is positively correlated with their achievement motivation which supports the present finding.

Table 4: Correlation between goal orientation and mental health among youth

Variables	Performance approach	Performance avoidance	Learning orientation
Mental Health	0.23*	-0.34*	0.06

*   Significant at 0.05 level

From table 4, it is observed that mental health of the students had a significant positive relationship with performance approach of goal orientation. Performance approach orientation is associated with a strong desire toward achieving well (Sideridis, 2005), which could result in sound mental health. It is noticed from the table that mental health had a significant negative relationship with performance avoidance of goal orientation. Students with performance-avoidance goals try avoid failure in front of others which could obviously result in poor mental health. Hence the negative relationship between mental health and performance avoidance is logical.

Table 5: Influence of achievement motivation and goal orientation on mental health among youth

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable	Unstandardized coefficient		Beta	't' value (Sig. at 0.05 level)	Model Summary
		B	S.E			
Academic Success		0.31	0.12	0.14	2.68	
Vocational achievement		0.49	0.08	0.31	5.63	
Skill achievement		0.39	0.09	0.21	4.03	
Achievement motivation: Total	Mental health	0.44	0.05	0.50	9.37	F=20.45 R=0.60 R²=0.36
Performance approach		0.30	0.09	0.16	3.11	
Performance avoidance		0.42	0.09	0.24	4.62	

| Learning orientation | | 0.20 | 0.09 | 0.11 | 2.08 | |

From table 5, it is noticed that academic success, vocational achievement and skill achievement of achievement motivation had a significant influence on mental health of the students. Kumar and Varma (2019) opined that high achievement motivation generally ensures higher rate of success; and forms the basis for a good life (Brunstein & Maier, 2005) which may enhance mental health. Accordino et al., (2000) highlighted that mental health of the students tend to influence their achievement motivation.

It is also noticed that all the dimensions of goal orientation had a significant influence on mental health of the students. Broussard and Garrison (2004) reported that higher level of goal orientation is related to greater academic achievement in students. Greater academic achievement will lead to sound mental health as well.

Structural equation modeling (SEM) is utilized for representing, estimating, and testing a network of relationships between latent constructs (goal orientation & achievement motivation) and measured variable (mental health). SEM was used to determine whether this model is valid. Model's parameters were estimated and the resulting model implied covariance matrices are consistent with one another. Hence, the structural equation model can be considered a plausible explanation for relations between the measures, and the model fit summary is presented in table 6.

Table 6: Model fit summary and structural models comparison (N=263)

Indices	Obtained Values	Suggested values	References
Chi-Square	1.49	<5	Kline, 2005
GFI	0.99	>0.90	Hair et al.2006
AGFI	0.95	>0.90	Daire et al.2008
CFI	0.90	>0.90	Hu and Bentler.1999
SRMR	0.05	<0.08	Hu and Bentler.1999
RMSEA	0.04	<0.08	Hair et al.2006

Structural Equation Modeling Diagram
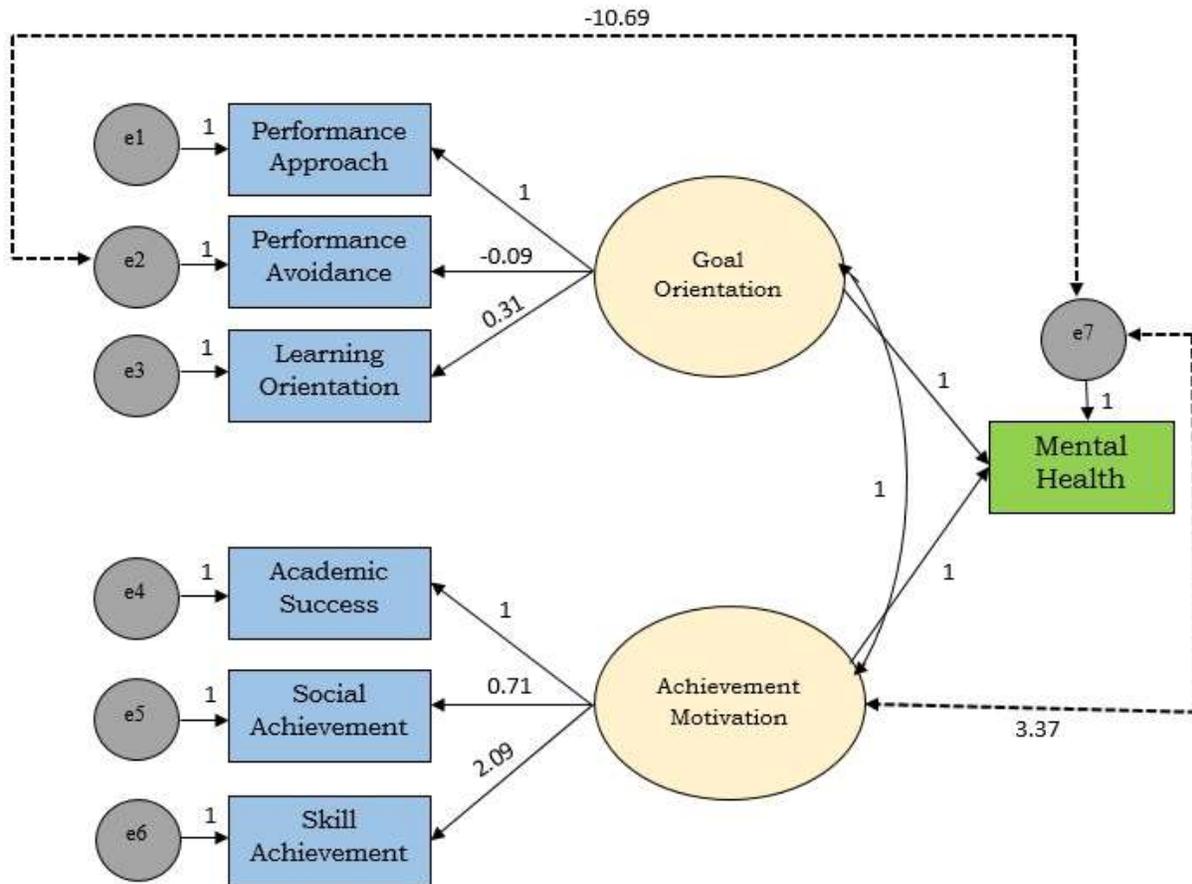
Fig. 1: Summary of standardized path coefficient for the hypothesized code with full sample (263). Solid lines represent significant coefficients, dotted lines represent covariance values.

regression analysis indicating a structural and causal relationship among the variables. It is evident from the model that the social achievement and skill achievement have a stronger role in predicting mental health of the students.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study revealed that girls had lesser skills in social achievement. Life skills training may be provided to girls to overcome obstacles which in turn help them to enhance their social achievement. Also, girls had lesser performance approach and learning orientation. Training programs could be arranged to improve their approaching towards performance and orientation towards learning. Boys had displayed poor in academic success compared to girls. Schools can provide training through workshops to flourish them in their academics.

Further, it is found that girls had displayed poor quality mental health. Schools could be utilized as a promising platform for delivering mental health interventions to enhance their wellbeing. Learning orientation of students had a very less influence on mental health of students. Trained mental health professionals could be arranged to help the students. Teachers may provide students with challenging tasks to increase their goal oriented behaviour and achievement motivation which would result in the maintenance of better mental health.

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