Influences on Goal Orientation

Alejandra Chong and Mindy Mele
Eastern Oregon University

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze whether there was an influence on individual goal orientation self-perspective was when an individual was pre-exposed to a description of a either a performance or mastery goal orientation, as well as whether there was an effect of a gender. A sample of 143 adults between the ages of 18 and 60 participated in the experiment in which they identified as mastery oriented or performance oriented. The results revealed there was no significant effect of gender differences and there was no interaction between gender and goal perspective. The analysis did show an effect on the goal orientation that participants identified with depending on which goal orientation perspective the participants were exposed to.

Introduction

A significant amount of research has been dedicated to trying to find out what is the best method of learning for any given individual. Goal orientation is described as the particular way in which an individual engages in developing or demonstrating an ability to learn, achieve, and be successful in any situation (Anderman, 2015). There are presently three studied perspectives of goal orientation, mastery, performance, and multi-perspective (meaning both goals), individuals typically identify with one when they are trying to learn or gain new skills (Barron & Harackiewicz, 2001). Additionally, Elliot and Dweck's (1988) results suggest that participants' personal achievement goals are factors that can affect whether participants develop a helpless or mastery-oriented pattern. Identifying which type of goal orientation an individual prefers can help educators find ways to make learning easier for that individual, furthermore gender could be taken into consideration and further expansion of teaching methods can be altered to help the individuals be more successful (Barron & Harackiewicz, 2001). In regards to the previous research, the present study hypothesized that there would be an influence on individual goal orientation self-perspective when an individual is pre-exposed to a description of either a performance or mastery goal orientation. In addition, it was also hypothesized that there would be a gender difference in how males and females identified as their own goal orientation.

Methods

Participants
- 143 adults, 52 males and 91 females, that ranged in age from 18 to 60 were recruited from the Hermiston and La Grande Eastern Oregon University via paper and social media advertisements, participated in the experiment.

Stimuli
- Two paragraphs were created to emphasize different goal orientations, mastery and performance. A third neutral paragraph was about schizophrenia.

Procedure
- Participants were asked to read one of three paragraphs describing either mastery orientation, performance orientation, or a neutral topic, that was determined based on their birth month.
- After reading the paragraph the participants were prompted to solve 5 simple mathematical problems.
- Upon completion of the mathematical problems, they were instructed to complete a survey that determined which goal orientation they identified as having.

Methods cont'

Statistical Design
- A between subjects two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to identify effects on goal orientation when participants were pre-exposed to the description of either mastery orientation, performance orientation, or a neutral topic. This test was also used to analyze if there were any interactions between goal-orientation exposure and gender.

Results

Gender Differences
- There was no significant effect between male and female goal orientation $F(1,137) = 2.04$, $p > 0.05$.

Condition Differences
- There was an effect on the goal orientation that participants identified with depending on which goal orientation perspective the participants were exposed to $F(2,137) = 4.13$, $p < 0.05$. Participants more heavily identified as mastery oriented after being exposed to the performance orientation description paragraph.

Gender and Condition Interaction
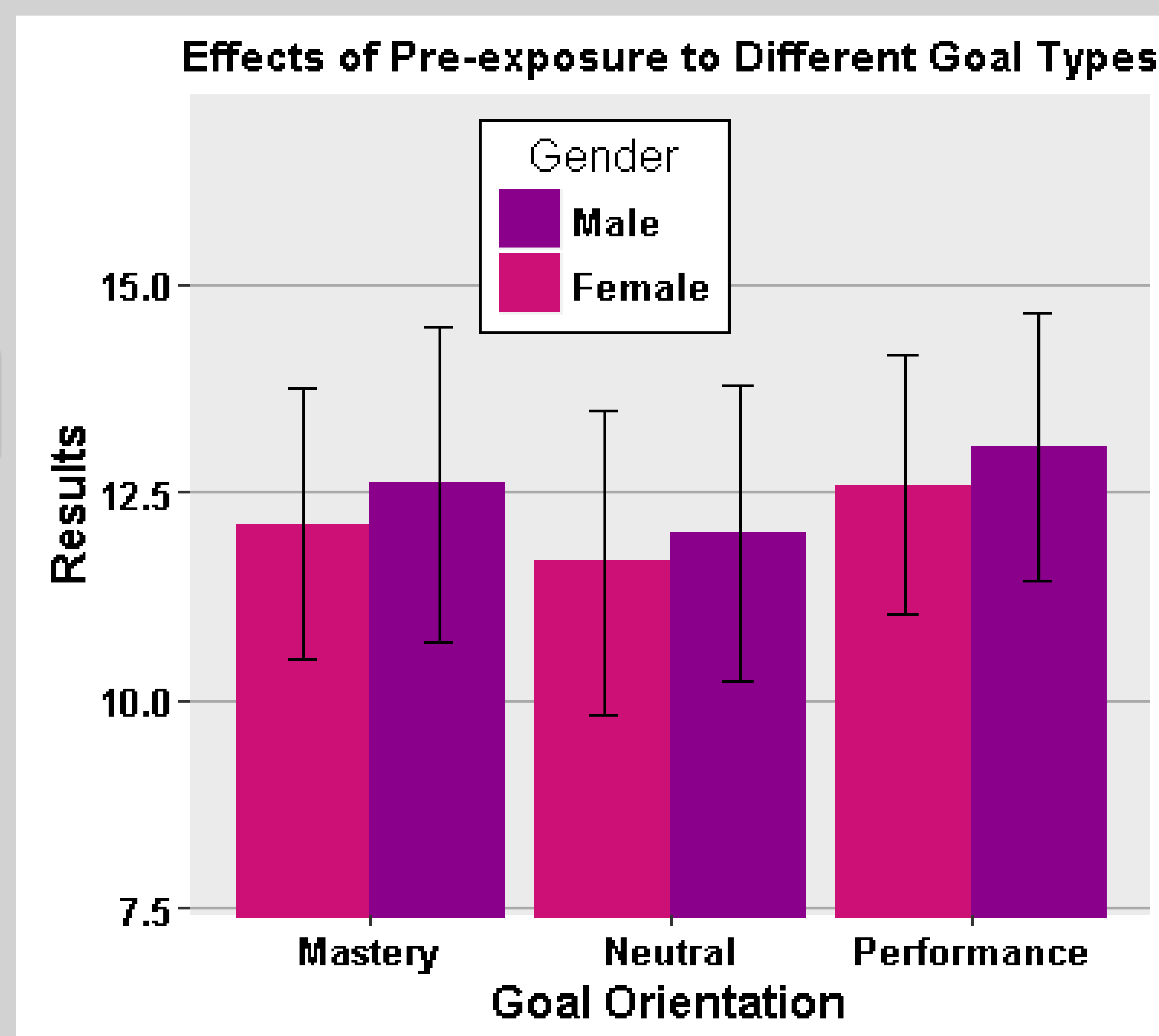- There was no interaction between gender and goal perspective type $F(2,137) = 0.02$, $p > 0.05$.

Figure 1. The means for male and female results for each goal orientation condition and neutral condition. A higher score equals a higher orientation to the mastery goal perspective.

Discussion

Contrary to our hypothesis, we found that there was no display between genders nor was there a significant interaction between gender difference and condition type. However, we did find that there was an effect on self identified goal orientations. Those individuals who were exposed to the performance condition received a higher score which indicated that they related most to the mastery perspective, while those exposed to the mastery condition scored lower on the scale.

This was the opposite of what we expected to find. We suspect that being exposed to the performance condition made the individuals be more self-conscious of what their learning orientations were and this could have affected their survey responses. However , more research is needed to be able to draw this conclusion.

After receiving the results we were able to identify possible weaknesses in our study that could help future research. The 16 question survey format may have had an influence on how the participants responded. In our study we organized the survey to have the first 8 questions pertain to mastery goal while the last 8 pertained to performance goal. It is suspected that if the questions were mixed up differently the results might have been different.

Secondly, the wording of the questions might have also influenced how the participant answered. We noticed that the mastery goal questions were worded more positively while the performance goal questions could have been interpreted as negative.

Our hypothesis was not supported, however we did find that those individuals who were exposed to the performance condition had higher survey scores than those who were exposed to the mastery condition. This meant that these individuals identified more with the mastery perspective than those in the mastery group, which was the opposite of what we predicted.

References

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